

Artificial Intelligence

by The Chuckinator

Category: Halo, Sonic the Hedgehog

Genre: Sci-Fi

Language: English

Status: Completed

Published: 2014-03-14 06:53:05

Updated: 2014-03-29 01:30:23

Packaged: 2016-04-27 04:52:07

Rating: T

Chapters: 23

Words: 23,448

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Tails has created a new invention that turned Sonic into an artificial intelligence in order to see what Eggman is up to. They soon get a visit from Shadow, who tells them that the Black Arms are approaching and are ready for war, and eventually discover that the Black Arms have teamed up with another alien species called the Covenant, and are searching for something called Halo.

1. Tails' New Invention

Artificial Intelligence

by Fangs of Lightning and The Chuckinator

Chapter 1: Tails' New Invention

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Sonic was walking towards Tails' house. The fox had called him about a new invention, and Sonic was more than happy to try it out. Once he got there, he rang the doorbell and Tails opened the door.

"Hey, bro," Sonic said. "So, what new invention do you want me to test out today?"

"If I made it properly, I should be able to change you into an artificial intelligence. Afterward, you could go into Eggman's computers and stop any plans he comes up with before he can do anything."

"Really? That's awesome! I'll be an AI forever, I assume?"

Tails nodded. "It'll be fine, though."

Sonic smiled. "Alright, then. Let's do it."

Tails left the room and came back soon with a device. "Ready?"

Sonic nodded. Tails turned the device on and aimed it at Sonic, who felt himself beginning to transform into an AI. He found himself vanishing. A pulling sensation came from the device Tails was holding, sucking in the particles that used to make him whole. A moment of darkness happened before Sonic found himself somewhere completely foreign. His body was reforming from the head down into what he assumed was the inside of a computer. Pieces of a code came to lay atop one another, piecing together the puzzle that made him who he was. Sonic watched in fascination as they did so. His hands went through the other parts of his body that he tried to touch. Sonic shook his head, laughing. Now he understood what Tails had been trying to explain.

"Sonic?" Tails asked. "Can you hear me?"

The hedgehog was now an AI and transferred itself to a computer. "I'm here," it said through the speakers. "What do you want me to do?"

"Find Eggman's computers."

"And then what?"

"Find a way to stop whatever he's planning. You can get to his computers from here, can't you?"

"Yeah, I think so," the AI said.

It vanished from Tails' computer, exiting through the electric outlet. As it was traveling, it felt many sensations. Electricity traveled through his body as he traveled. It was an amazing feeling; the AI was traveling at the speed of light. It soon entered Eggman's base and felt itself merge with the computers. Then, it set to work. Sonic looked around at everything around him. He had to find Eggman's plans, wherever the scientist had them. The AI began to hack through the computers, looking for the plans. many different files popped up in the mainframe and it looked through each one. After minutes of searching, the AI had finally found the plans. Sonic looked them over, reading them to the best of his abilities before deciding what to do with them. The AI made a copy of the plans and sent them to tails before deleting the originals. It then looked around the computers and an idea came. It was time to have some fun.

Sonic went through the rest of Eggman's files, sending anything else he thought would interest Tails. After all of that was done, Sonic started thinking of how to mess with Eggman. It looked around and saw the robots that Eggman had made, especially Metal Sonic. The AI chuckled before transferring to Metal Sonic and began to control him. Sonic looked down at his arm as he lifted it up. He'd never thought he would be in control of Metal Sonic.

The AI smiled and scanned the area, wondering where Eggman was. He transferred back into Eggman's computer but kept control of Metal Sonic. A few minutes later, the AI made Eggman's systems go haywire before vanishing from the computer. It could control Metal Sonic from wherever it was. When it got back to Tails' house, it appeared in his computer.

"I did it," Sonic's voice came through the speakers.

Tails nodded. "I forgot to tell you, Sonic...now that you're an AI, you have a seven year lifespan. After that, you'll go into rampancy and die out."

The AI was surprised to hear this. "Why?"

"It's just how AIs work," Tails said.

"Well, I guess I'll have to do as much as I can in those seven years."

Tails smiled. "You'll do fine," he said. "I looked through the files you sent me. Eggman doesn't seem to be doing much anymore, but we have his plans for what he might do."

"Anything else you want me to do?" The AI asked.

"Is there anything you want to do?"

The AI thought about it. It vanished from Tails' computer and created a small hologram of itself on a holotank. Tails smiled and walked towards it.

"That's it?" Tails put a hand out, trying to touch him.

His hand passed right through the AI, however. The AI smiled. "I figured I could test out what I can do now," it told him.

"How long are you going to stay like this?"

The AI shrugged. "I can stay like this as long as I want," it said.

Tails smiled and nodded. "What else are you going to try out?"

"I'll probably copy myself onto some discs and electronics."

"What are you going to do with those?"

"Not sure," the AI said. "I already took control of Metal Sonic while I was at Eggman's."

"So he won't be causing any more problems?"

The AI shook its head and then vanished back into the computer.

2. Shadow's News

Chapter 2: Shadow's News

The AI nodded and began to practice. Over the next hour, the electronics in the house were going haywire. Tails wondered what it was doing. Later, the AI formed its holographic self and smiled.

"So, what can you do?" Tails asked.

"I can control all the electronics in the house."

"That's cool," Tails said. "So you can control all electronics?"

"Yes," it said.

"How much can you make them do?"

"Everything. I'm pretty powerful as an AI."

"I didn't know I'd make you that powerful."

It chuckled. "Well, you did. Don't worry, Tails; I won't take over the world."

Tails nodded and looked at the holographic AI. It smiled at him, and then an idea came to Tails. He went into his lab and brought out a portable computer.

"Whenever you're a hologram, you can stay portable here," he told it. Sonic smiled. "Will you keep it with you all the time?"

"Most of the time, if you're a hologram."

The AI nodded, and then vanished into the PDA. It then came out of the screen as a hologram. "Thanks," it said.

"You're welcome Sonic." Tails looked around.

He placed the data chip down as the AI went back into the computer. Suddenly, a knock was at the door and Tails opened it to see Shadow, who came inside.

"I have news from GUN," he said. "We've just received word that the Black Arms are heading back to Earth."

"The Black Arms? Why?"

Shadow shrugged. "They are going to wage war on us. We need all the help we can get; they'll be here in a few days."

Tails thought about it and nodded, then led Shadow over to the invention he made. "I'll help any way I can." Picking up the invention, he showed it to Shadow. "Sonic is an AI in here."

Shadow's eyes widened. He looked around the house. "Cool," he said. He walked over to a desktop computer, and Sonic's voice came out.

"Hi, Shads," it said.

The black hedgehog was surprised, and nodded. He looked at Tails, wondering if he could become one also.

"What? Did you want to try it too?"

"Sure," Shadow said. "It would be interesting to be an AI."

Tails nodded. "Alright. You'd have a lifespan of seven years, though."

Shadow shrugged; that didn't matter. "I'm fine with that. What do I do?"

"Put your hands on this. It will convert your body into code and send you into the nearest electronic."

Shadow nodded and did so. A few minutes later, he had been sucked into the computer. The other AI, Sonic, saw him.

"Hi, Shadow," it said. "Decided to become an AI too?"

"It seemed interesting, and I couldn't let you have all the fun."

The AI chuckled. "Cool. So, what's the news? You mentioned the Black Arms are coming to invade Earth? I can help with that."

Shadow nodded. "G.U.N. said they needed the assistance. Could you teach me how to use this form properly?"

The AI nodded. A few hours later, Shadow had learned everything about being an AI. The two AIs vanished from the computer and entered GUN's mainframe, creating small holograms of themselves on the holotable.

"What are we going to do now?" Shadow asked.

The other AI looked around. It saw the Commander, who noticed the two holograms and walked up to them.

"What are you doing here?" he asked them. "Is this how Tails is going to help?"

"We have become artificial intelligence," the first AI said. It turned to the hologram of Shadow and nodded.

The commander nodded. "We will install you two in a few ships when we go into space to confront the aliens," he said, looking at the AIs.

"What exactly do you want us to do?" Shadow asked.

"You two will be part of the ships and control it."

"The weapons?" Shadow didn't bother hiding the hope in his tone.

"Everything on the ship," the commander said.

"All right. We can handle that."

They vanished and reappeared in Tails' computer.

"What's the plan?" Tails asked them.

"They're going to install us on two separate ships," the hologram of Sonic said. "You're going to be the captain of one of them."

Tails' eyes widened. "Captain of an entire ship? I don't know if I

can do that."

"You'll be fine."

Tails thought about it and nodded. "Which ship is going to be mine?"

"The one I'm on," the hologram of Sonic said. It smiled. "We'll let you know which one."

Tails returned his smile. "That's great."

The two AIs nodded and vanished.

3. The Black Arms

Chapter 3: The Black Arms

A few days later, Tails went to GUN and spoke with the commander.

"Are we going to attack the Black Arms yet?" he asked the Commander.

"They are in range of Earth," the Commander said, nodding. "Here is your ship."

Tails followed the Commander to his ship. He went inside and looked around. It was amazing. In the center of the ship, an AI appeared. It looked at Tails and smiled.

"Hey, Tails," the AI hologram said.

"Hey. So what am I supposed to do if you're here?"

"Pilot the ship," it said. "And give orders to the crew. We'll be leaving in a few minutes."

Tails nodded and got himself acquainted with the ship's controls.

A few minutes later, the ship took off and went into space. Tails steered the ship in the direction that the Black Arms were supposed to be. The AI stopped the ship. It looked around and saw the alien ships approach. An alien appeared on screen.

"People of Earth, my name is Black Doom. We are the Black Arms, and are here to take control of this planet. Who is the captain of this ship?"

Tails walked up. "I am."

"What is your name, captain?" Black Doom asked.

"Tails."

"Tails, tell your people that we are at war with your species. All inhabitants of Earth will burn. The war begins now."

The screen turned off. Tails hesitated and looked at the AI.

"What can we do?" He asked it.

"Fight, of course. I'll let G.U.N. know what he said."

Tails nodded and looked out the window. His eyes widened as he saw the alien fleet. There were many more than the ships GUN had. "Can we do this?" He'd felt all his determination leave him at the sight of the aliens.

The holographic AI shrugged. "If I can power the ship's gun's, we may hold them back for now."

The captain nodded and the AI disappeared. Tails returned to his seat and waited to see how this was going to play out. He saw the MAC guns warm up and began to fire at the alien ships, who began to fight back. They pressed on, however, and began to enter Earth's atmosphere as the aliens invaded the planet. Tails' eyes widened in shock, and began to shout orders at the soldiers.

"They're coming! Open fire on the aliens, and do your best to stay alive."

The soldiers nodded and continued to fire. The AI did anything it could do to help also. Suddenly, a bright beam of light shot the ship down as it came crashing into the city. The ship destroyed a few buildings before coming to a stop. Tails groaned and stood up. He looked around and saw that most of his crew was dead. The captain sighed and look the AI out of its holotank, loading it onto its data chip for portable use.

Tails looked himself over to make sure he was all right before starting to leave what remained of the ship. He walked back to GUN, limping. When he got there, he loaded the AI into a computer. It came up in its holographic form and spoke.

"Are you all right Tails?" The AI asked.

"I'm fine...give me a damage report, now."

"The ship's destroyed. The others aren't faring much better, either. The crew on the ship is all dead, as well."

"What about the ship that Shadow is on? What is that AI doing?" Tails asked.

"Shadow's having too much fun with the guns," Sonic said. "It may have to retreat soon, though."

Tails smirked and nodded. A few minutes later, Shadow's hologram form appeared also. "The war's not going well, I presume?"

The other AI shook its head. "It is not. Even though this war just started, we are already at a disadvantage," Shadow's holo form said. "We may be at war for a long time. I calculate...seven years or more."

Tails groaned at Shadow's calculations. "How can a war last that long?"

"The Black Arms have powerful resources," it said. "They won't be defeated so easily this time."

"Why did they come back in the first place?"

"They are searching for something," the AI said. "Something called Halo."

4. The Pillar of Autumn

Chapter 4: The Pillar of Autumn

"Halo?" Tails was definitely confused now. "I don't think I've ever heard of something by that name."

The AI shook its head. "Neither have I. They've teamed up with another group of aliens called the Covenant."

"That doesn't sound good..." Tails sighed. "I assume we need to find this 'Halo' before they do, as well as fighting them?"

The artificial intelligence of Shadow nodded. "Yes," it said, and looked at Sonic. "What do you think?"

The other AI was quiet. Then it spoke. "We'll be going after something we don't know anything about in the middle of a war. I think we should be cautious. Remember the kind of person Black Doom is."

Tails nodded, and looked at the AI. "So, where is this...Halo?"

"On the other side of the galaxy, but we can get there using hyperspeed."

Tails nodded. "Let's find some way to get going, then."

The two AIs vanished and Tails looked around for another ship. He saw one called the Pillar of Autumn, and went inside it, taking the two AIs data pads with them. Once inside, he saw that there was a crew already inside. He placed the datapads inside the holotank, causing the two AIs to come up in their holographic forms.

"We need your assistance to get to the other side of the galaxy," Tails said to the nearest person. "Please."

The person turned around and nodded. Tails gasped; he was a giant man, covered in green armor and wore a helmet on his head.

"Spartan John 117, at your service," he said. "I'm part of GUN's Spartan program."

The captain gulped. "Nice to meet you. I'm Tails." Tails stared up at the man, feeling much shorter than usual. He was also nervous.

The Spartan nodded and walked off. Tails gulped again; John was seven feet tall, while Tails stood only at five. The captain sighed and started the ship up, then blasted off into space.

"How long until we reach Halo?" He asked the two AIs.

"It shouldn't take too long," Shadow said. "I'm worried about whether or not the aliens have already gotten there."

Tails nodded and they flew on. The captain hoped they wouldn't come across any aliens on the way there. Everyone stayed on edge, looking out for any aliens. Fortunately, they didn't run into any. A few months passed, and they finally reached Halo. It was a large, circular construct hovering in space. Tails' eyes widened as he saw that both the Black Arms and the Covenant were already there.

"What do we do?" He asked the holographic AIs.

"Kill them," Shadow said. "What else?"

Tails looked at the artificial intelligence. It disappeared before controlling the cannons, firing at the alien ships. However, both the Black Arms and the Covenant were beginning to board the ship.

"Get to the escape pods," Tails said. "And kill any aliens you come across."

The soldiers nodded and ran off.

"Sir," John said. "I would like to go as well."

Tails nodded, looking at the Master Chief. He loaded Sonic onto its data pad and gave it to the Spartan, who put it in his helmet.

"Not a lot of room in here," the AI said. "Hello, Master Chief."

"Hello. What should I call you?"

"Call me Sonic," the AI said as it spoke.

The Master Chief nodded and looked at Tails. "What about the other AI, Shadow? Is it coming with me too?"

"Do you want him too?" Tails looked over at Shadow as he asked.

The other AI thought about it. "I'm not sure if his helmet can fit two AIs," it said, looking at John. "But I can give it a try."

John stood and waited while they tried. A few minutes later, Shadow's voice could be heard inside John's helmet. The Spartan sighed and nodded, then grabbed a battle rifle.

"See you on Halo," he told the captain, and walked out of the control room. It was time to kill some aliens.

5. Halo

Chapter 5: Halo

The moment he stepped off the ship, he looked around. Aliens were fighting the others, falling rather quickly for how dangerous they had proven to be on Earth. The Spartan growled angrily and looked around; he had to find an escape pod. The aliens, both Black Arms and

Covenant, had boarded the Pillar of Autumn. he aimed at the aliens, firing with his gun, and killed some.

"Grenade!" Sonic's voice yelled suddenly, causing the Master Chief to dive to the side.

The grenade exploded, unable to damage more than the ship. The Master Chief continued past where the grenade had been, looking out for what had thrown it. He then saw a Covenant grunt alien holding two grenades and his eyes widened as he shot it. The grenades exploded and he continued on to the escape pods. When he reached them, he opened one and got in.

"Can you tell where Tails is?" he asked the AI.

Sonic scanned the ship. "He's bringing the Pillar of Autumn in for a landing," it said.

The Master Chief nodded. He saw some aliens and shot them before closing the escape pod, and blasted off towards Halo. It wasn't much better when the pod had finally landed, either. The descent was rocky, and the pod crashed onto the ring world. The Master Chief got out of the pod and looked around.

"Did anyone else make it?"

The two AIs scanned the field.

"I think there are some over to the west," Shadow said.

The Master Chief nodded and started walking down the terrain. He looked up and saw a Banshee overhead. He sighed; those ships were annoying if they saw movement and fired; they were hard to shake off unless he destroyed them.

"What are you going to do about it?" Shadow was the one who asked.

"Destroy it," the Master Chief said, and took out his battle rifle. A few shots was all it took for the Banshee to go down.

The two AI were impressed, Sonic stating his opinion as the Master Chief started moving again.

"How long have you two been AIs?" The Master Chief asked. "You must have been created pretty recently."

"As long as this trip. Why?" Sonic asked.

"Just wondering. I've had an AI before with me; her name was Cortana but she...died."

"Died?" This time, Shadow spoke up. "What was the pause for?"

"She and I made a pretty good team," the Master Chief said.

The two AIs understood.

"Oh. I thought I was acting weird or something," Sonic said.

John smiled and continued on. He saw a Warthog and got into the jeep before driving it. The two AIs kept silent in the helmet's mainframe, occasionally giving directions. The AI also kept a lookout for anything helpful or suspicious in the surroundings. A half hour later, they saw the Pillar of Autumn. John jumped out of the Warthog and saw a fellow soldier.

"Tails has been captured by the Black Arms," he told the Master Chief.

"When?"

"As soon as we landed. The Black Arms took over the ship and captured him. They brought him to the Black Comet."

The Master Chief sighed. If they didn't kill the fox, they'd probably find some way to use him as a hostage against them.

"What do you think we should do?"

"We have to rescue him," Sonic's AI said as it heard what happened to Tails.

"Right now?"

"We can't let anything happen to him," it said.

The Master Chief thought about it and nodded. He walked inside the Pillar of Autumn and inserted Sonic's data pad into the holotank. The AI came up in its holographic form and scanned the area.

"So, where's the Black Comet?" The Master Chief asked it.

"On the other side of Halo," it said.

The Master Chief nodded. "Any way we can get there?"

"Scanning..." the AI said. "We can get to the Black Comet by means of a vehicle."

The Master Chief nodded. "Any particular kind of vehicle?"

"A warthog."

The Master Chief nodded and took Sonic's data pad out, putting the AI back in his helmet.

"Tell me when we're getting close," he told the AI.

He got in the Warthog, and followed the two AIs directions. Plenty of aliens were on Halo, giving the Master Chief plenty of problems aside from driving. They shot at the vehicle, but the Spartan fired back at the aliens surrounding him while he was driving. Some other soldiers followed him as well. The AIs helped every way they could, continuously searching the surrounding areas for any better routes. The other soldiers helped kill the aliens.

Between this and driving, it took a long time to reach the Black Comet.

"We're almost there," the AI of Shadow said. "A few more miles."

The Spartan looked around, wondering how many more aliens were going to attack them. Suddenly a large blast knocked him off the warthog. He skidded to the ground and looked around.

"Wraith!" the two AIs said at once, leaving the Master Chief with a little headache. He looked up and saw a large machine shooting off plasma blasts.

Getting to his feet, he thought about what to do.

"Any plans?" He asked the two AIs.

One of them spoke as it calculated the odds of destroying the Wraith. "It would be easiest to get around behind it, I think," the AI said. "Trying to run from it wouldn't be a smart move."

The Master Chief nodded and did so. When he was behind the Wraith, he took out a rocket launcher and aimed. When he felt he had it aimed properly, he fired. The Wraith exploded a little. As the Spartan fired more, he destroyed it.

"That wasn't too hard," Sonic said as it spoke.

The Spartan nodded. "No, it wasn't. We should continue to the Black Comet as quickly as we can."

"You're right. I'll give directions," it said.

The Master Chief got back in the warthog and continued to follow the AI's directions.

6. The Black Comet

Chapter 6: The Black Comet

The Spartan looked up at the ship and looked for a way inside.

"Think we can blast a hole in the wall?" Shadow asked.

John saw a door and tried to open it but it was locked.

"Put me in the console so I can hack the door's mainframe," Sonic's AI said.

The Spartan put Sonic's AI into the console and waited. The AI glowed as it began to hack into the mainframe. It finally got into the mainframe a few minutes later. Soon, the door opened. John took it out of the console and put it back in his helmet, then walked inside the ship. Looking around, he couldn't help but sigh. It looked about how you'd expect an alien ship to look.

One of the AIs spoke up. "Careful," it said. "I'm sensing Black Arms aliens all over the place."

John made sure he was ready before going any farther into the ship. With Black Arms all over the place, he didn't want to be caught

unprepared. He checked the ammo in his guns and began to venture into the ship. The two AI would help, so he just had to talk to one and it would help.

"Where do you think they have Tails? Can you tell?"

"In the cell block," one of the AIs said as it scanned the ship. "I put the location on your HUD."

John looked at the map and started plotting how the route to the place the AI had marked. It would take a long time until he reached the cells with all the enemies around the ship, but he knew that the artificial intelligence he had could help.

"Is there anything I should be extra cautious about in here?"

The two AIs scanned the ship.

"Watch out for Hunters," the Shadow AI said as it continued to scan. "They're Covenant aliens."

John nodded. "I'll watch out."

He readied his rifle and began to go along the map the AIs had plotted out for him. He had barely gone anywhere when the aliens began attacking. John sighed in annoyance and began to fire at the aliens. It didn't do much, as the aliens had their own weapons and fired back. The Spartan saw his health shields go down and took cover, waiting for them to recharge. As he waited, he thought over what to do now that the aliens were firing at him with their own weapons. The obvious approach was to wait until they stopped firing and return fire then.

He smirked and did so. The aliens were soon dead and he started moving again.

"How much further?" He asked the AIs, not knowing which one would respond.

"A while," Shadow's AI said. "Just keep moving."

John thanked it and did so. He followed the map, occasionally running into aliens.

"The cell block is at the end of the ship," one of the AIs said. It scanned the ship and an arrow blinked on John's HUD. "Follow the arrow I put up. You should be there in half an hour."

As he followed the route, John thought of how he would get Tails out of there.

The two AIs were thinking about that too, and spoke up. "Look for a console. We can hack into the security systems and shut down the cell block so you can get him out," the AI that was Sonic said.

"All right. Can I expect even more aliens to come running once you do?"

"Most likely."

John nodded and searched for a terminal. He soon saw one and inserted one of the AIs inside. It came up in its holographic form and hacked the systems.

"This will take a while," it said. "I'll tell you when I'm done."

"I'll be waiting." John stretched as he stood in wait. Keeping his weapons ready, he kept looking around for aliens.

A few seconds passed and a swarm of aliens, both Covenant and Black Arms, came running out into the hall. The Master Chief tensed and began to fire, waiting for the AI to finish its work. He still had the other, Sonic, in his helmet. "Can you tell how many there are?"

"I count about...fifteen," the AI said as it scanned the aliens. "We're going to be busy." John nodded in agreement and continued shooting the aliens. A few minutes later, the AI at the terminal spoke up. "Done," it said. "Come and get me."

John quickly got the AI back and ran into the cell block to get Tails.

"John!" Tails said as he got out. "It's good to see you."

The Spartan nodded and got the captain out of the cell. "It's good to see that you're all right."

"Let's get you out of here."

They walked out of the cell but then Sonic's AI spoke up. "I'm detecting multiple hostiles," it said.

"Can you tell me how many?" John prepared himself as he waited for a response.

"At least thirty."

John didn't like the sound of that. Especially with Tails there with him.

"What can we do?" He asked Tails. "Could the AIs do anything?"

"If there were any electronics for them to utilize, they could."

"Are you kidding?" One of the AIs asked. "There are electronics all over this place. We can help."

"Then do it," John said. "We need to do everything we can."

He took the data chips that held the AIs and gave them to Tails, who plugged them into the control panel. Suddenly, the two AIs were in the process of taking control of the entire ship.

"What are you going to do about the aliens once you've taken control of the ship?"

"You take care of them," the AI said as it continued to move through

the ship. "We'll handle it."

Tails looked at John. "What's the plan?"

The Master Chief pulled out his gun and began shooting at the aliens. Tails sighed and did the same. A few minutes later, the Artificial intelligence inside the ship had taken control, and disabled all and John started moving then, making sure to shoot the aliens on their way. At the nearest terminal, Tails retrieved the data pad that held the AI. it then turned into its holo form and spoke.

"We have control of the ship. Now what do you want us to do?"

Tails thought about it. He looked at the AI and told it what to do.

"Since it's ours, we should use it the way it's supposed to be used."

"The ship isn't ours. We may have control of it but not for long," the AI of Sonic said.

"How long exactly?"

"Fifteen minutes."

Tails nodded. "So what can we do in fifteen minutes?"

The AI looked around. "Escape," it said.

They nodded. Tails took the AI out of its terminal and put it back into the Master Chief's helmet. Then, they hurried out of the ship as fast as they could.

7. Assault on the Control Room

Chapter 7: Assault on the Control Room

The aliens tried to stop them, but didn't get very far. Once they were out of the ship, tails looked at the Spartan. "I overheard the Black Arms talk about Halo. They referred to it as a weapon that could turn the tide of this war. This is bad. If this world really is a weapon, we need to use in on the enemy. It could be our only hope of winning this war. Where do we go to do that?" Tails asked the AIs.

"There's a control room around here," one said as it came out in holo form.

Tails nodded. "Let's go figure out how to use it."

They nodded and started to drive. The AIs scanned the land.

"There's a building known as the Silent Cartographer that will tell us where the control room is," the two AIs told them.

"Lead the way," John said.

Tails smiled as they followed the directions of the artificial

intelligence. They reached the building a while later, killing all the aliens that attacked them on the way. However, when they got there, the Black Arms, along with the Covenant, had overtaken the building. Tails frowned.

"We'd better fight them to get inside."

"Make sure we're completely ready before we go."

Tails nodded. He and the Master Chief got their guns out and started to shoot. The aliens shot at them as well, including the soldiers they had with them. Tails looked back at the other soldiers to see how they were doing. The soldiers were faring well but were falling fast as the aliens had more advanced weapons. The Master Chief ran into battle, shooting the aliens as they retaliated. Tails followed him. They made it into the building and looked around. There were more aliens inside, easily taken of as they found their way to the map they were looking for.

"I'll locate the map," the AI said in Sonic's data pad. It scanned the area and located the map.

They followed the AI's instructions through the building. It was hard because they had to come across aliens, but eventually came to the cartographer. The Master Chief inserted the AI into the console, and it came up in its holographic form.

"I'll find the control room," it said.

"Thanks," Tails said.

The AI nodded and began to work. It looked through the files. The AI was looking for the location of the control room, but kept other important information it found stored inside it. After a few minutes, it found the location.

"Got it," the AI said. "The control room is on the other side of this ring."

"Can you mark its exact location?" John asked.

"I can try," the AI said. It looked through the files some more. A few minutes later, it found the location. "I've got it. Let's go."

They nodded, and went up to the top of the building. A dropship came, and they got on it. They started on their way to the location the AI had pinpointed on the map. It took a few hours to reach the other side.

"We're here," the AI said. "It's not going to be easy; there are aliens everywhere."

"What about Shadow?" Tails asked. "Can it do anything?"

"Of course I can," it said.

Tails smirked. "Great," he said. "We'll insert both of you into the console once we get to the control room."

The AIs agreed and the group continued in silence. It took a while, but they finally got to the control room. Tails looked around as they walked into the control room. The Master Chief inserted the two AIs into the console.

"What can you see?" He asked it.

"Everything Halo can do," one of them said. "What do you want us to try? That would help narrow our search."

Tails thought about it. "See if there's a weapons cache available. We could use the weapons here to combat the aliens."

One of the AIs nodded and did so. Its eyes widened in fear. "There are some kind of parasitic aliens trapped here."

Tails' eyes widened. "What?"

The AI nodded. "You have to go to the cache and stop them! If released, they could spread throughout the galaxy!"

"How?" Tails looked at the Master Chief. "We should go."

The Master Chief nodded, and they ran off. The two AIs looked at each other. "They left us here."

"Then we'll explore the control panel and learn Halo's secrets," the other AI said as it vanished back into the panel.

That one nodded and vanished, followed the other.

8. 343 Guilty Spark

Chapter 8: 343 Guilty Spark

Meanwhile, Tails and the Master Chief ran to the weapons cache and gasped. Blood was everywhere, and the Flood was on the loose. Tails was instantly nervous.

"What do we do?" He asked the Master Chief.

"Shoot to kill."

Tails nodded. He aimed his gun at the Flood and fired. The parasites were soon on them. The two kept shooting at them, trying to kill as many as possible. The Flood overcame them and they saw many Infection forms that looked like zombies. The two looked at each other and ran.

"What are we going to do now?" Tails asked him.

The Master Chief looked at him and fired at the Flood. His eyes widened behind his helmet as he saw humanoid-like Flood walking around. They had weapons in their hands and were shooting back.

"These bastards are like zombies," the Master Chief said. "What do you suggest we do, captain?"

Tails looked around at the Flood as well.

"Maybe we should retreat for now. I don't know if we can kill them all now."

The Master Chief nodded. A few minutes later, a monitor flew up to them.

"I am 343 Guilty Spark," it said. "Someone has released the Flood. My function is to prevent it from leaving this installation. But I require your assistance. Come. This way."

Tails and the Master Chief looked at each other before following the monitor. It teleported them to another building and looked at them.

"We must collect the Index before we can activate the installation. It is the only way to stop the Flood."

"All right. What do we do?"

"Follow me," 343 Guilty Spark said, and floated off. Tails and the Master Chief looked at each other before following. It took a long time, due to all the Flood, but they finally reached a room. A small index stood in the center. Tails took it, and looked at the robot.

"Now what?"

The robot said nothing and they teleported back to the control room. Tails hesitated and placed it in the terminal but then the holographic forms of the AIs appeared, looking very angry.

"Do you know what you've done?" The hologram of the blue AI said. It took the index out of the terminal and held the key in its hand. "We have spend 12 hours in this terminal, learning Halo's secrets."

The Master Chief and Tails looked confused. The holo form of Shadow's AI sighed. It looked at them, and then spoke.

"Halo can't kill the Flood. It will kill everything else in the galaxy so they starve."

Tails' eyes widened in shock. He looked at 343-Guilty Spark. "Is this true?"

"Yes."

The Master Chief looked at Tails, and then at the two AI's.

"How should we deal with this?" he asked.

"Destroy Halo," one said as it looked around the room, sensing something. Sentinels were coming in, aiming at the group. 343 Guilty Spark heard this.

"You can't destroy Halo. That will kill the Flood."

"But isn't that what you want?" The AI said.

"We must contain them," 343-Guilty Spark said. "If you do not comply, I will be forced to kill you, construct. Give me the Index," Sentinels hovered above them, aiming for Tails and John. "Or watch your friends die."

The two AIs looked around at everything, assessing the situation. The Sonic AI closed its eyes and the Index vanished into its data-streamed body. The moment the index disappeared, everything started moving again. John walked over to the terminal, placing the two AIs inside his helmet again. As he did so, the Sentinels started firing. Tails fired back without giving much thought to it. The Spartan did as well.

"Keep firing," one of the AIs said as it scanned the room for more Sentinels.

The two kept firing. A few minutes later, the Sentinels were destroyed and Tails, along with the Master Chief, retreated.

"We don't have much time," Sonic's AI said as it came up on John's HUD. "I have the Index. We need to destroy Halo."

"Just tell us the best course of action."

"If we can get to the Pillar of Autumn, we can use the ship's thrusters to start a chain reaction and destroy this ring," it said.

The Master Chief nodded. "Then that's what we'll do."

Tails and the Master Chief looked around, and tensed as they saw some Black Arms aliens shooting at them. They had forgotten that they were still at war. They found cover before the Black Arms could damage them and returned fire from there.

The Black Arms continued to fire, as did the Covenant.

"Looks like they're still hell-bent on firing this ring," Tails told John. "We need to destroy it soon. It won't win the war but it could turn the tide."

John nodded. "Do you think it'll make it any easier to defeat them?"

The captain thought about it. "Possibly," he said.

"What do you two think?" John asked the AIs.

"Destroying is bound to anger Black Doom. I'm not sure if that will make it more difficult or not."

"Most likely it will," Tails said. "But we have to destroy the ring eventually. I'll go back to the Pillar of Autumn and start it up. You continue to search for the means to destroy this Halo ring."

"Take care of yourself," John said.

Tails nodded and left. The Spartan sighed and continued on.

"So," he asked. "What do we do?"

The AIs were silent for a moment. Then one of them spoke. "We need to stop it from firing. I'll mark where you need to go. Just destroy the generators there."

John nodded and saw markings appear on his HUD. The Spartan frowned; it was a long way to the generators. However, he had to do it.

9. Destroying the Generators

Chapter 9: Destroying the Generators

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John readied himself and started on his way to the generators. Along the way, the Black Arms and the Covenant had begun to attack him. The Master Chief did the same as every other time they attacked him, killing whichever ones he could before running by. He soon exited the building and came to a large valley. Looking around, he saw the enemies of his HUD, as well as the markers where he was supposed to go.

"How much further?" He asked the two AIs.

"Not too far," one of the AI told him.

John nodded and continued on. He did his best to keep too many aliens from attacking him at once. It was a simple process: rinse and repeat. All he had to do was kill the aliens, reload his ammo, and do the same thing. Eventually, he got to the first generator. He stopped and looked at the generator. Explosions usually destroyed things like these.

"Any advice?" He asked the AIs. One of them came up on his HUD.

"Find a way to blow it up."

The Master Chief looked around. He saw a rocket launcher nearby and picked it up, then aimed and fired. After a few shots, the generator was destroyed. The AI then put up the location for the second generator. John looked at the map to make sure he knew where he was going before walking off.

"You'll get to the other generator in about a half hour," the AI said as it came up on the Master Chief's HUD. "When you get there, plug Shadow into the console. It can make sure the generators are down."

"I'll remember that."

The AI fell silent as it told the other. After a while, they came to the next generator. After the Master Chief destroyed it, he plugged Shadow's data pad into the console. The AI came up in its holographic form and scanned the area.

"Are the generators down?" John asked it.

"I believe so."

The Master Chief nodded. "Anything else we need to do?"

"Get back to Tails."

John took the AI out of the console and put it back in his helmet. "Can you set a waypoint to the Pillar of Autumn?" He asked.

The two AIs did so. "Get in a Warthog," Sonic said. "You'll get there faster."

John looked around for a Warthog. He saw one in the distance and ran towards it but more Sentinels appeared, shooting at him. John returned fire as soon as he could, moving to take as least damage as possible. He destroyed the Sentinels but then more Flood came out of nowhere, as did Black Arms. The Spartan realized that he was outnumbered.

"What do you suggest?" He looked around as he waited for one of the AI to respond.

"Put us in the console. We can take control of the guns and fire at them."

John put the AI into the console and got ready to fire if he had to. The AI set to work. One of them stayed in the console and hacked the guns. The other then transferred itself into the turrets, firing at the aliens. John watched as the aliens got shot down, using his own weapon when he had to. He didn't have to do much; the two AIs were doing the work for him. Once the aliens were all dead, John took the AIs back. He ran to the Warthog and got in.

"You two are pretty powerful," he told the AIs as he drove. "Who created you?"

"Tails."

The Master Chief nodded. "That kid is pretty smart."

The two AI agreed, and the Spartan drove towards the Pillar of Autumn. When they got near the ship, they could tell something was wrong.

"Stop." Sonic came up on the Spartan's HUD. "I'm detecting multiple Flood hostiles," it said. "Proceed with caution."

John got his weapon ready as he drove forward. He got out of the vehicle and walked inside the ship cautiously. The AI on his HUD scanned the ship.

"Is anything wrong?" John asked it.

"There are a lot of hostiles," it said. "I can't find Tails, either."

The Master Chief frowned. "I don't like this," he told them.

"We don't either. Just look for Tails."

John nodded and started walking through the ship. Most likely, Tails had gone in the direction of the controls. He followed the AI's

directions and soon came to the control room. The Pillar of Autumn had started up and the Master Chief sighed. He walked back but frowned as he saw blood leading away from the controls. That alone made him dread following it. Against what he was feeling, John followed the bloody trail. The trail of blood got larger until he was met with a gruesome sight.

Tails was slumped against the wall, blood pouring from open wounds on his body. John was hesitant about getting any closer to the dying fox.

"Captain...?" He asked.

"What happened to him?" the AI of Sonic asked.

The fox didn't react.

"I think he's been killed," the Master Chief said.

Suddenly, Tails' body jerked.

John watched in horror as Tails morphed. The fox's body seemed to split, causing more blood to paint the floor red. The broken flesh and skin expanded, growing much larger than the fox's original size. His head got smaller, the large pointed ears flattening and molding to his head. The fur sticking off his cheeks grew longer, hanging down at the sides of his head as a pair of tentacles. The morphing creature stood as the flesh of its body continued forming into the thin body of the monster. At both ends, the rest of him grew much larger as well. Thick legs supported the body, the fox's feet and legs morphing into the mismatched form of the monster's. The right foot changed more than the left, morphing into a kind of animal's foot while the left looked like the stump left behind after an amputation. The shoulders bulged out as well, growing until they looked unproportional to the body beneath them. Tails' thin arms became mismatched like his feet, the left shorter than the right. What looked like some kind of mutated claw developed on the right arm, causing the left to appear underdeveloped.

It had all happened in a matter of moments, and it attacked John before he could properly react.

10. Back to Earth

Chapter 10: Back to Earth

"TAILS!" The two AIs yelled in John's helmet.

The Spartan was forced back as the Flood attacked. It screeched loudly and ran forwards. He moved out of its way, running into the wall in the close quarters.

"What the hell is that?" He asked the AIs.

"I don't know yet." The AI was trying to figure out what the creature was as it responded. "It was Tails," the other AI said. "But now he's turned into some sort of Flood creature. Tails must have been infected."

"Damn it..." John said. He had to try and defeat it. If not, he could be killed by the parasite. He watched the creature as it came after him again. "Any suggestions?"

The Spartan rolled out of the way as it attacked again.

"Either kill it or get it off of the ship," one AI said as it appeared on John's HUD. "It is no longer the captain."

John put some distance between himself and the creature, readying the weapon in his hands. He turned and took aim, firing at it. It roared in pain as he hit the Flood Tank but it did nothing. The creature was too powerful. A few minutes later, it had pinned John up against the wall and turned its arm into a tentacle, piercing the neck of the Spartan's armor. John could feel it digging into his skin and tried to pull the tentacle out. Suddenly, he felt a burst of energy from his suit and his energy shields dropped to zero as the tentacle suddenly moved away. One of the AIs must have done something. It came up on his HUD and he asked what it did.

"I used the energy in your shields to attack the creature."

"Thanks," John said. "It's too powerful to be destroyed. We need to get it off of the ship."

Shadow's AI spoke up. "Is there any way to turn the creature back to normal?" It asked.

"I doubt it." John looked around for a way to get it off the ship.

He then saw a console and put the two AIs inside. They came up in their holographic forms.

"See if you can get this thing off the ship," he said.

One of them nodded. It took control of the ship and opened the cargo hold. "Now we just need to get him out of it."

The ship started to take off as the Flood screeched, trying to hold onto the door, but it flew off into space. John frowned. Flood could survive in space. He had a feeling this wasn't the last they'd see of it. Suddenly, the ship's thrusters maxed to their full power and started to destroy Halo.

"Get us out of here," he told the AI.

The AI nodded and did so, blasting away from Halo as the door closed. The Master Chief watched as Halo was destroyed.

"That's it," the AI said as it saw the destruction. "Halo...it's finished."

"No. The Covenant and the Black Arms are still out there. This was is far from over."

"Back to Earth we go."

The AI nodded and set coordinates for Earth, and they blasted off.

"What are we going to do once we reach Earth?" John asked the AI.
"I'd rather have a plan when we get there."

"We're working on it," the AI said. "Most likely the Covenant and the Black Arms will be there."

John nodded. "Maybe we should see what the situation is before coming up with a plan."

The AI nodded. "Scanning..." it said.

John waited for the AI to finish. "What did you find?" He asked it.

"They're everywhere. I can pinpoint their bases once we get there."

The Spartan nodded and put the two AIs in the holotank. They came up in their holographic forms and looked at him.

"How much longer until we get there?" he asked.

"We're 25,000 light years away from Earth. It will take us a few years to get there."

John sighed and sat back in a seat. "You don't suppose they'll have control of the planet by then, do you?"

"Most likely they will," one of the AIs said. It began to falter. "I can try to make the jump to slipspace but that might not work."

"What are the chances?"

"40 percent. The slipspace engine is damaged, however."

"I don't like that. Don't bother."

The AI nodded and looked at the other. "What shall we do?" It asked Shadow's hologram.

"You mean to pass the time?"

"Yeah."

Shadow's hologram thought over it. "I don't think there's much we can do."

The AI nodded, still looking at the other. "Alright," it said. "Once we get back to Earth...we'll have five years left."

"What do you mean?"

"Tails said we'll only have seven years until we die."

"I see what you're saying," the other AI said.

"How do you want to spend all that time?"

"We could help in the war," the first AI said. It looked at John and

back to its AI partner. The hologram of Sonic looked at John as well. "How long do you think the war will last?"

John shrugged; he didn't know.

"Earlier, I calculated the war would take seven years or longer," Shadow's AI told them.

Sonic's AI frowned. "I hope it doesn't take that long."

The other AI shrugged. "I hope not," it said. "But we need to help John and the others any way we can."

"Of course." Sonic's AI looked at John again. "Are we going to stay with him the entire time?"

"Most likely. Unless the Commander wants us to do something else." It turned to the Spartan. "What do you think, Master Chief?"

"Sounds good to me."

The AI nodded and vanished into their holotanks. John sighed again. Without trying, he easily thought up things that could happen to the ship over the years it would take to reach Earth. He just hoped none of them happened. The Spartan saw a cryo tank and crawled inside it, knowing that the AIs would defend the ship. By the time the Pillar of Autumn reached Earth, they would probably arrive in the middle of a battle. John closed the cryo tank and closed his eyes.

11. Another Mission

Chapter 11: Another Mission

Two years later, the Pillar of Autumn finally reached Earth. The two AIs came up in their holographic forms.

"Activate the cryo tank," Sonic's holo form told the other. It nodded and did so.

They waited for John to awaken once the tank opened. The Master Chief climbed out of the tank and looked around. He noticed many ships surrounding Earth.

"Assessing damage..." one AI said as it came up.

"What's the situation?" the Master Chief asked it.

"What we were expecting it to be. The aliens seem to have control of the planet. I'm amazed they haven't killed everyone yet."

"Damn it...can you scan to see if there are any people still alive?"

The AI nodded. After a scan of the planet, it sighed in relief. "Not many, but I don't know why the aliens didn't kill them."

"That's good. Land the ship; we have to help them."

The AI scanned the ships to find the best route to land before moving

the ship. A few minutes later, the ship landed. The Master Chief took the two AIs out of their holotanks and placed them back into his helmet.

"Do you two have any friends that we could recruit?"

"If they're still alive," Shadow's hologram said.

"Tell me where they are."

The two AIs came up on his HUD.

"Scanning.." one said. It looked around the city, scanning for its friends. "Silver and Blaze are here," it said. "The Chaotix are still alive as well."

"Where can we find them?"

This time, Shadow's AI spoke. It gained the information it needed and told him. "Silver and Blaze are walking through the city. The Chaotix are in their agency's office. I'm a little surprised it's still standing."

The AI set a waypoint, and the Master Chief set off in that destination. John watched for aliens as he walked, trying not to look too conspicuous and attract their attention. He was fortunate not come come across any, and soon saw Silver and Blaze, then walked up to them.

"Are you Silver and Blaze?"

"We are," Silver said. "Who are you?"

"Spartan 117 John," he said. "I'm part of G.U.N.'s Spartan Program."

Silver nodded. "It's nice to meet you," he said. "What is it you want?"

"I was looking for people who could help fight these aliens. My AIs said they knew you."

"Who are they?"

"Two hedgehogs. Their names are Sonic and Shadow."

Silver and Blaze's eyes widened.

"Of course we will," Silver told the Master Chief. "Lead the way."

John checked his map again to find the Chaotix's office. Once he got there, he said the same thing and the Chaotix agreed,

"What now?" He asked the two AIs.

"We need to defeat the aliens," John said. "Got any advice on where to go?"

The two AIs thought about it. "GUN will have something," one said as

it pinpointed the location. "Also, I'm giving you coordinates to the alien bases so that we can destroy them."

John looked at the others. "What do you want to do?"

"We'll come with you," they said.

"G.U.N. first, then." The group began walking in the direction the nap pointed out for them. "What's left of them?"

They nodded and walked to GUN. When they got there, they walked into the base and looked around for someone to talk to. The Master Chief walked up to the Commander.

"Ah, Master Chief," he said. "How was your journey?"

"Good, Sir." The Master Chief saluted the Commander. "We destroyed the Halo. What's going on with Earth?"

"Things are pretty bad," he said. "While you've been gone, the Black Arms and the Covenant have discovered Earth. We've been holding them back but many people have been killed. Other than that..."

Static appeared on screen and Black Doom appeared. Everyone looked at the alien, unable to stop the glares coming to their faces.

The AIs came up in their holographic forms on the holotable and looked at Black Doom.

"You are, all of you, vermin. Cowering in the dirt, thinking... what, I wonder? That you might escape the coming fire? No. Your world will burn until its surface is but glass! And not even your Demon will live to creep, blackened, from its hole to mar the reflection of our passage; the culmination of our Journey. For your destruction is the will of the gods! And I...I am their instrument!" Black Doom said.

"We aren't done," the Master Chief said. "The war will continue, and you'll find that it's much harder to truly defeat us than you're expecting."

Black Doom chuckled. "You may have destroyed one Halo, but there are six more. And The Ark will fire them all."

John looked at the others in concern. But at least they knew what they had to do. "We will win this war, and soon the Flood shall consume all. That entire universe will be wiped clean."

"We'll just have to stop you before that happens." Despite the confidence in his tone, there was a slight nagging at the back of his mind saying they may not succeed.

Black Doom chuckled and the screen went blank.

"What should we do?" The Master Chief asked the AI.

"Trying to destroy the other Halo is the obvious course of action. But I don't know if we'll be able to destroy all six."

"I agree," the other AI said. It looked at the Master Chief, as well

as Silver and Blaze. "But what I'm curious about is this Ark that Black Doom mentioned. I don't think it's the one by the moon."

"Probably not." The AI looked at the humans in the room. "Do either of you know anything about another Ark?"

They shook their heads.

"I'm sure we'll find out something about it later," Blaze said.

"Hopefully before he uses it," Silver added.

"What are your orders?" The two AIs asked the Commander.

The Commander thought it over. "It just might be easier to go after the Halos rather than look for the Ark he mentioned."

They nodded and vanished. The Master Chief put the AIs back in his helmet. "What about the aliens here on Earth?" He asked. "Should we do anything about them, or just go after the other Halo rings?"

"We can deal with the aliens. We've managed for this long."

The Master Chief saluted and left.

12. Delta Halo

Chapter 12: Delta Halo

They got back in the Pillar of Autumn and look off. The two AIs came up in their holotanks.

"Where is the nearest halo?" The Master Chief asked one.

"Scanning..." it said. The AI pulled it up on the map so the Master Chief could see it. "The nearest is Delta Halo," it said.

The Master Chief looked at the map and nodded. Setting the course, he watched out for any alien ships.

"How long will it take to get there?" He asked it.

"A few weeks."

"Okay, then," the Master Chief said.

Silver smiled and looked at the AI. "What is it like to be artificial intelligence?" He asked them.

"Different. It's kind of..." the AI trailed off, thinking over the question. "Strange, but amazing. I can do so much more, but at the same time, so much less. I need to be inside something to actually get more done than explaining things."

"That's cool," he told it.

The AI nodded. "One downside is that we only have seven years to live."

Silver frowned. "Only seven years? Why?"

"That's the lifespan of an AI. We go into rampancy when we begin to deactivate."

Silver nodded in understanding. "I'll miss you when that happens. ...How did Tails make something like this?"

The AI of Sonic chuckled. "Tails made us."

"But how? I know he's a genius, but this is incredible."

It looked around. "Why don't you explain, Shads?" It asked.

The other AI came up. It nodded and told Silver. "He made a machine that transferred our bodies to digital coding and the rest came with it. Just don't ask how he made the machine. He was a genius, and I have no idea how he managed it."

"Was?" Silver asked.

The AI hesitated and then sighed. "He...was transformed into a Flood creature," it said.

Silver blinked a few times. "Turned into... one of the aliens? Did you kill him?"

"No...it escaped."

Silver nodded. "He's not there anymore, right?"

"We don't know where it is now," Shadow's holographic form told him.

"No, I mean his mind. He's not suffering in that body, is he?"

"The Flood has completely taken over him," the AI said. It sighed. "They're a parasitic species, Silver. Once they transform you, they're in control."

"That makes me feel a little better. Are we going to end up fighting them?"

"Most likely we will."

Silver whimpered a little.

"It will be fine," the AI of Sonic said. It looked at Silver in concern. "You'll just have to try and not become infected."

Silver nodded. A few minutes later, the Index appeared in the AI's transparent hand. "Take this," it said. "It's the Index for activating Halo."

"Why are you giving it to me?"

"You're pretty useful, Silver, with those psychic powers of yours."

The Index will be in good hands with you."

Silver nodded. "I just need to keep everything away from me."

"Let's hope so."

The psychic hedgehog smiled and left. Before he did, he looked back. "Is there any way that Blaze, the Chaotix and I could become artificial intelligence?"

The AI nodded. "I'm sure the device is around somewhere." It looked over at the Master Chief. "Would you mind?"

The Master Chief nodded and walked away. A few minutes later, he came back with a device. "Is this it?" he asked the two AI.

They looked at it and nodded. "That's it."

John nodded, and Silver took it, activating the machine. A bright glow came from it, engulfing him. Soon, he was an AI as well.

"This is cool," the new AI said as it came up on a holotank. It looked at the Index in its hand and saw the object vanish. "How are we going to destroy all the Halos?"

"The same way we did to the first one," the AI of Shadow said. "But we need to find out what the Ark is."

"Do you think the Halo will have anything about it?"

"I highly suspect it will."

The AI nodded and they continued on their way to the Halo. A few weeks later, they got there and landed the ship.

"One of the AI must stay with the ship," the Master Chief said.

The three AI looked at each other. Finally, Silver's holographic form appeared. It looked around the ship, and then at Master Chief.

"I'll stay," it said.

Master Chief nodded. "All right. Keep the ship safe."

The AI nodded as it secured the ship. The Master Chief put the other two AIs into his helmet and walked outside followed by Blaze and the Chaotix.

"What do we have to do?" Blaze asked.

"Find the control room and get information on the ARK," the Master Chief said.

"Where is the control room?"

The Master Chief thought about it. "Can you scan for the control room?" He asked the AIs. "Of course we can." The AIs scanned to find the control room, marking it on the map once they had found it. The Master Chief nodded. He looked around for any vehicles but didn't see any. This would take a while. "Can you scan for any enemies

also?"

The two AIs did so. After they did that, one came up on the monitor. "I'm detecting Flood hostiles all over the place," it said.

The Master Chief looked at the others. "You ready?"

"Ready," Blaze and the Chaotix said. The Master Chief nodded and gave them guns and ammo. They looked at their weapons and nodded, then followed the Spartan.

13. Gravemind

Chapter 13: Gravemind

The group watched their surroundings as they walked, expecting the Flood to attack at any moment. Instantly, they heard loud noises and saw the Flood attack. All of them readied their weapons and began firing at the creatures. The infection forms exploded upon impact but some others weren't so easy to kill. They fired their own weapons at the group. Blaze looked around for a way to avoid taking too much damage. She brought up her hands and summoned her pyrokinesis, hoping that would help. Fire burst out toward the Flood where her comrades weren't standing.

They screeched in pain and died. the Master Chief was surprised at this. "You have pyrokinesis?" He asked.

"Yes...I thought Sonic or Shadow would have told you, so I didn't."

The Master Chief nodded, and they continued on. As the AI had said, it took them a few hours to finally reach the control room. When they got there, the Spartan put the one of the AI into the terminal. It began downloading everything about Halo.

"Can you locate any information about the Ark?" He asked it.

"I'll keep an eye out for it."

The Master Chief and the others nodded, waiting. The AI scanned some more until it saw a file on the Ark, and downloaded the file into its data.

"I just downloaded some information on the Ark."

"What does it say?" Blaze asked the AI.

The AI's hologram of Sonic came up. It looked very serious, as if it was not wanting to tell them what it just found. Then, the AI spoke. "The Ark has the power to fire all of the Halo rings at once."

"Does it say anything about how much time we'll have?"

"It has to be activated first. Black Doom and the Prophet of Truth are on their way there as we speak."

"What can we do then?" Blaze asked.

"We need to head there immediately. Forget destroying the rest of the Halo rings; this is an even bigger threat."

"Do you know where the Ark is?" John asked the AI as it continued to scan.

"I'm looking." The AI looked through the data as fast as possible.
"Ah, found it. It is outside of the Milky Way galaxy."

"In that case, let's get moving."

The AI nodded. Suddenly, it yelled in pain and flickered rapidly, its holo image appearing and disappearing instantly. The others looked at it, wondering what was wrong.

"What's going on?" Blaze asked. Both she and Espio were looking around the room in search of anything that could cause it.

"Gra...ve...m...in...d..." the AI stuttered, its image flickering more rapidly. Suddenly, it vanished from the control panel.

"That is definitely a bad sign," Espio commented.

At the same time Vector asked: "What was it trying to say?"

Suddenly, a voice rang out. It was a deep, guttural sound. "You fools think to elude me? I...am a monument to all your sins. I am Gravemind."

The group looked, but couldn't see anyone. Suddenly, the room started to shake and a shape appeared beneath it, crawling its way up. When it came into view, they saw it was a massive Flood creature with a head and many tentacles that had long snake-shaped body. Everyone jumped back in an attempt to avoid the creature.

It laughed hideously. "I am the mind of the Flood," Gravemind told them. "Your construct sought to elude me, but it was futile. Thanks to you fools, this AI is now my prisoner." The Master Chief looked at the others for ideas. The AI of Shadow was glaring at Gravemind. "The Flood will spread through the galaxy, infecting everything in its path. Soon, there will be nothing left..."

"What is the purpose of infecting everything?" Master Chief asked.
"What are you after?"

"My purpose?" Gravemind said. "The Flood will infect everything, and we will move to Earth with one of the infected ships. Soon, we shall be the ultimate species."

"Only because there won't be any others," Shadow's AI said. "That's like stealing the title."

"Silence," Gravemind said, looking at it. "Be warned: I could capture you easily as well. But I already have one artificial intelligence with me and it shall not be so easily rescued."

Shadow's AI looked at Master Chief. The Spartan was about to take it out of the console but suddenly, a wave of pain overcame the AI. It

flickered violently and then vanished from the console, now a prisoner of Gravemind. Master Chief backed away from the console. They had to leave before something happened to them as well. They took one looked at Gravemind and left.

"What are we going to do now?" Blaze asked.

"I don't know," Master Chief said. "Find a way to rescue the AIs and stop Gravemind."

"What about the Ark?" Vector was the one to speak this time.

"We'll deal with that too. Let's head back to the ship; there's another artificial intelligence there. It can tell us what to do."

The rest of the group agreed and they ran in the direction of the ship.

Once they got there, Silver's holographic form came up. "Did you find where the Ark is?" It asked. They nodded, and then the AI saw them. "What's wrong?"

"Sonic and Shadow have been forced to side with the aliens," Blaze said.

"What?" The AI said, its holographic eyes widening. "How did that happen?"

"Something by the name of Gravemind," Master Chief explained. "It's the mind of the Flood, and plans on turning every living thing in this galaxy into the Flood to take the title of the ultimate species."

"Great...just great. Do you have the coordinates to the Ark?" Master Chief nodded and plugged them into the holotable. The AI put them up and nodded, then spoke. "That's a long way. I can plot a route if you want, but how are we going to get there before Black Doom can use it?"

"We could go through slipspace," John said. "Do a scan on the slipspace drive and see if it's working. And plot a route to the Ark."

The AI nodded and got to what Master Chief had told it to do.

14. Slipspace

Chapter 14: Slipspace

After the AI had finished looking at the slipspace drive, it looked at the Spartan and spoke. "It's operational. But I doubt we can use it to return." The AI pulled up the map so Master Chief could see it. "This is the safest route I could find."

The Master Chief nodded. "How long will it take us to get there?"

"If we use slipspace, a few days. If not, it'll take us a

year."

"And you said we won't be able to use slipspace to return? Why not?" Blaze asked the AI. It looked at her.

"I don't know if it will be able to do it."

"Well, it's better than nothing. Let's go."

The AI nodded and started the ship. Suddenly, another ship came on the motion detector and Master Chief saw that it was the Flood infected ship that Gravemind was talking about. That must be where he and the two AIs were.

"What should we do about that?"

"Track the location on where it's going," Master Chief told the AI. "Now."

The AI nodded. It tracked the other ship to find out where the ship was going. A few minutes later, it looked at the others.

"Have you scanned its location?" Espio asked it. The AI nodded. "Where is it going?"

"In the direction of the Ark."

Master Chief nodded. "Get us in the air and ready the slipspace portal. How long will that take that ship to reach the Ark?"

"Not any longer than us, I think." The AI concentrated and it soon got the ship running. "Opening a portal to slipspace...now," it said. The ship went into slipspace a few moments later. "We'll be there in a few days," the AI said as it scanned the ship. "I'll continue to scan for enemies."

It vanished a few minutes later. Blaze was impressed with the artificial intelligence; it seemed pretty powerful and knowledgeable.

"What's your opinion on being an artificial intelligence, Silver?" Blaze sat as she asked the AI.

"It's really amazing," the AI said. "I can do so many things now that I wasn't able to before."

"Like what?" She asked it.

"Tracking something, for one. Knowing what something is without having to ask someone, controlling this ship. I'd never be able to do that as myself." The AI smiled. "Stuff like that."

"Anything else?"

"I can go through things. Inside a computer, I can literally touch the data. Electronics follow my every command, too." The AI paused. "Do you really want me to list it all?"

Blaze thought about it. "Sure. It would be interesting to see what you can do."

The AI chuckled. It smiled at her, and nodded. "Was there anything you had in mind?"

"Can you go into a computer?"

The AI walked forward and vanished, then appeared inside a computer. Blaze's eyes widened in shock. What it just did was incredible, but the AI could only pass through electrical systems and things like that.

The AI shook its head. "That took more out of me than I thought." It flickered back to its holotable and stood there, looking at Blaze.

"You seem to be pretty powerful," Blaze said. "I wouldn't mind becoming a artificial intelligence myself. How long are you active for?"

"What do you mean by active?"

"You know...usually computers activate and shut down. Since you're an AI, you'll eventually malfunction."

The AI understood. Blaze was asking about its lifespan. "Seven years."

Blaze was shocked by this and nodded. "It's the same with the other two AI's, right?"

It nodded. "Unless something happens and gets rid of them before then." The AI frowned. "Not sure what could do that, though."

"What's rampancy?" Blaze asked. She had heard the other two AI's mention it to Silver earlier.

"Rampancy is when an AI's memory map has too much on it and the AI starts using its computer power to figure thing out."

"So, you literally think yourself to death," Blaze said. "Am I right?"

The AI nodded. "More or less."

"Alright; I was just wondering."

The AI gave Blaze a smile. "Do you think we can get them back?"

"The other AI's? Most likely."

It nodded and vanished back into its holopad. Blaze sighed and started thinking about what to do to win this war. They had to destroy the Ark and defeat the Flood, along with the Black Arms and Covenant. After a few minutes of thinking about it, she stood to go discuss the plans with the others. It wouldn't hurt to having something resembling a plan.

"Hey," she said as she walked up to the Master Chief and the Chaotix. "I was wondering what we were going to do once we reach the

Ark."

"That would depend on the situation, to an extent," the Master Chief said. He looked at the Chaotix. "What do you think?"

"We would have to be cautious," Espio said. "Not only is Black Doom and the Prophet of Truth there, but the Flood are heading there as well. On top of that, we need to get Sonic and Shadow back."

"Cautious it is then. I'll get inside that ship and get our AI's back," John said.

"So, how much time do we have to pull off all of this?" Vector asked. "Anybody know?"

The AI came up in its holographic form, calculating how long it would take. "It shouldn't take longer than a few hours."

"Great," John said. "Well then, let's plan out what to do."

They nodded, and did so.

15. The Ark

Chapter 15: The Ark

A few days later, they reached the Ark. What they didn't expect was seeing another Halo ring a few miles from it.

"That's strange," the artificial intelligence said. "I'll see why it's there." It scanned the area and turned to John. "This ring is a replacement of the one you destroyed," it said. "This Halo is already complete."

"So destroying the Halo didn't actually accomplish anything?" Master Chief asked.

"Apparently not."

John sighed, barely hiding his irritation. "Will that affect the plan at all?"

"I calculate that it will," the AI said as it looked at the new ring.

"How?"

"If that one is there, the Ark may be able to use it against us. Setting a course to land on the Ark," it said. A few minutes later, the Pillar of Autumn landed. The Master Chief put the AI into his helmet and they walked out.

"Can you locate the Prophet of Truth and Black Doom for us?" He asked.

The AI didn't answer at first, scanning the Ark for their locations. As it had assumed, they were in the same place. "We need to find the Cartographer," it said. "The map will tell us where they are."

"All right. Which direction?"

A marker appeared on John's HUD, and he headed in the direction. It took a while for him to get there, especially with how he was trying to alert as few aliens as possible. The others followed him. They walked inside the Cartographer and the Spartan inserted the AI into the console. It came up as a hologram and began to locate the two enemy aliens. After a few minutes of searching the Ark, it finally had their locations.

John took it out and put the AI back in his helmet, and followed its directions. Soon, they came to the Prophet of Truth and Black Doom's locations.

"Get ready to fire," he told Blaze and the Chaotix.

They nodded and prepared themselves. The group walked inside the building. Black Doom and the Covenant Prophet of Truth saw them. The Prophet of Truth chuckled and spoke.

"You only delay the inevitable. One of you will light the rings."

The Master Chief looked at him. "You will die, Truth. The rings will never be lit."

Truth chuckled. He grabbed Espio and dragged him over to the control panel. Espio struggled against the alien's grip, finding it stronger than he would have expected. Truth lay Espio's hand on the control panel, activating the Ark. The others looked around as the Ark was activated. As soon as he was allowed, Espio yanked his hand back from the control panel. The seven holographic Halo rings lit up one by one.

"How do we stop it now?" Blaze asked Master Chief. She didn't know if attacking the aliens would do any good, but it was all she could come up with.

"Can you try and deactivate the Ark?" The Master Chief asked the AI. It came up in his HUD.

"I can try, but don't expect many results."

John nodded and waited. He walked up to the control panel and inserted the AI into the console. It tried hacking the Ark's mainframe, getting into it a few minutes later.

"I'm in," it said.

"All right. Look for a way to deactivate it." John looked around the room, expecting an attack of some sort.

Black Doom and the Prophet of Truth looked at their enemy. Then Black Doom spoke. "You will all burn once the Halos are active," he said. "What hope do you have?"

"Not much," Vector muttered. Master Chief and Blaze looked at him.

A few minutes later, the control panel began to spark and the

holograms disappeared. The AI came up as a hologram.

"I've deactivated the Ark," it said.

John smiled and nodded. "Good." He looked at the aliens. "Now we just need to kill them."

The aliens chuckled. "You will not kill us," the Prophet said.

Master Chief smirked and took out his assault rifle, pointing it at the Covenant leader. Blaze summoned flames into her hands, prepared to throw them at the aliens. She did so, and John fired his rifle, as did the Chaotix. They all hit the Prophet, who screamed in pain and fell to the ground. Black Doom vanished instantly.

"Where did he go?" Master Chief asked the AI.

"I'm not sure," the AI said. "I'll scan for his location."

Master Chief nodded and walked up to Truth, who glared at him. He looked down at the alien, raising his rifle. He would kill the prophet and end it.

"I am Truth...the voice of the Covenant!" The Prophet of Truth said.

"Tell me where Black Doom went," John said.

"I'll never tell you," the alien prophet said. "Even if you kill me, this war will continue!"

John sighed. They weren't going to get anywhere with him. Pulling the trigger, he shot the alien prophet. Turning back to the others, he spoke again.

"Did you find him?"

The Chaotix and Blaze looked at the artificial intelligence. It was scanning for the alien's location. "I'm still looking."

"Tell me when you find him," John said.

The AI nodded as it vanished into the console. It came up a moment later. "I don't have the location to where Black Doom is, but I know that the Flood are here right now. They just landed."

"Should we bother with them or just leave?"

It was about to answer when the room shook and Gravemind appeared, then spoke. "Now the gate has been unlatched, headstones pushed aside...corpses shift and offer room, a fate you must abide!"

Flood creatures appeared, including a Flood Tank form. John recognized it as Tails.

"We have to deal with them," John said.

"I'll keep looking for Black Doom," the AI told them. It vanished into the console and began to scan for the alien.

"We trade one enemy for another," Master Chief said. He, the Chaotix and Blaze went back-to-back, aiming their weapons.

"How hard is this going to be?" Blaze asked. She was summoning flames, preparing for the fight.

Master Chief didn't answer, and started shooting. The Flood continued to come and they looked around, then started to retreat.

"We have to find a way out of here," John said, and looked at the AI. "Any suggestions?"

The AI started looking again as the group continued attacking the Flood.

"Follow me," it said, and vanished from the console only to appear in another one. They followed it from console to console and soon came to an observation deck overlooking Halo. Master Chief nodded, acknowledging the AI's plan.

"What are you going to do?" A voice asked. John turned around to see 343 Guilty Spark.

"Light it," he said.

"Then we are agreed! A tactical pulse will completely eradicate the local infestation! I will personally oversee the final preparations."

Master Chief nodded and looked to the Flood ship, knowing he had to get the other two AI's back. He looked at the other AI. It shimmered for a moment before something appeared in its hand: the Index.

16. Finding the Artificial Intelligence

Chapter 16: Finding the Artificial Intelligence

"What are you going to do with that?" Master Chief asked the AI.

"When you find the other AI's, come back and get me," it said. "I'll come with you to Halo so we can activate it using this Index."

Master Chief nodded and looked at the Chaotix and Blaze. "You coming with me?"

"I suppose we could," Blaze said.

John nodded and looked at the AI, which vanished into a console. The group nodded before running to the Flood ship and entered it. "All right, let's split up and find the other AI."

They nodded and split up, walking cautiously around the ship. John looked at every console he came across in search of the other AIs. He'd try calling out for them, but he didn't think it would work or if there were any Flood remaining on the ship. Suddenly, he heard the two AI's voices in his head but they were distorted. John looked

around despite the voices being in his head. He couldn't make out what they were saying, and they weren't visible.

The image of the AI's appeared and turned a tinge of green. They clutched their heads and writhed in pain.

"What's happening?" John moved closer to the two, worried about what he was seeing.

He walked up to a terminal and saw them in their holographic forms.

"You found us..." one AI said as its image flickered rapidly. Its voice was distorted as well.

"What did Gravemind do to you?" Master Chief asked; he had to know.

"He convinced us to help him with his plans."

"But why are you two...like this?"

"We're going into rampancy," one of the AI said. "His torture was too much."

"Already?" John asked. "But that's not supposed to happen until you two are close to death after seven years!"

"I know." The AI gave him a weak smile. "I don't know what exactly is causing it."

Master Chief sighed. He took out their data pads, and the AI's stood up as the lines of code and equations once again begin to fall over their surface. They touched their respective chips and were uploaded into them as John put them back inside his helmet.

"Now I need to let the others know that I found you." He started walking back through the ship in the direction he had come.

"Wait," one AI said. "We need to destroy this ship first. Destroy the reactor pylons."

"Where are they?"

The AI marked them on John's HUD. John looked at the marks and ran in the direction of the nearest one. It took a while but he destroyed the pylons and walked out of the ship. The others were there as well.

"Let's get going to Halo," he said. They nodded in agreement and they left. Master Chief went to the console and took the other AI out. "Can you teleport us to Halo?" He asked it.

The AI nodded. "Give us a moment." A few moments later, the group was teleported to Halo.

"Do we know where Black Doom went yet?" John asked. "The war isn't going to end until we kill him."

"I can't get a lock on him," the Silver's AI said. "It's like he

vanished off the grid."

"How can he do that?" John looked around at the others and sighed. "Should we do anything about the Halo?"

"We need to light it," the AI said as it came up as a hologram. It held out its hand and gave John the Index. The new AI vanished into its data chip, and John put it into his helmet. "The control room isn't far."

"I'll be back soon." John ran off in the direction the AI told him.

Blaze and the Chaotix followed him. The three artificial intelligence scanned the area.

"Go through that mountain pass," one said. John did so. The control room wasn't far. Suddenly, the Flood appeared.

"Did you think me...defeated?" Gravemind asked angrily.

John had been hoping he was. He looked around, gripping his gun and getting ready to shoot. There were a lot of the Flood around, and he wasn't sure how well he could hold out.

"What do you think?" he asked the AI.

"The Control Room's at the top of that tower, Chief, go!" It told him urgently.

John looked at the tower the AI had told him to go to and set off at a run. He and the others fired, killing Flood and Black Arms along the way. When they reached the tower, they counted themselves lucky that they hadn't stuck around to fight the aliens. Wave after wave of them kept coming with no end in sight.

"Keep going," the three AIs said. "The control room is at the top!"

The Master Chief nodded and ran as his friends followed him. The aliens that followed them were quickly killed as they ran through the tower. Once they got to the top, a tentacle appeared and stung John. John staggered back and looked down at the tentacle. It was from Gravemind. The tentacle made a hole in his neck and was infecting him. His energy shields dropped as the AI's used the shield's energy, causing the tentacle to retract, but the Spartan could feel the Flood infection spreading through his body.

17. Infected

Chapter 17: Infected

Putting a hand to his throat, John looked at the others. He knew it wouldn't be long until he was changed. He held out the Index to them and waited for one of them to take it. Espio nodded and took the Index.

"How long until I transform into a Flood?" John asked the AI's.

"Not long; maybe a few minutes. What are you going to do?"

"I don't know," the Spartan said. "Can you slow it down?"

"I could due of the cybernetic enhancements you have. If I do that, you'll transform in a few days."

"All right, do that."

The AI did so. Once it slowed the infection down, it spoke. "You will still transform into a Flood soon, unfortunately. Hurry; we need to activate Halo."

"We need to get rid of him first," Blaze said.

"What do you mean?" Espio asked Blaze.

"Won't Gravemind get in our way?"

"When we fire Halo, it will get rid of the Flood, including Gravemind," Master Chief said. "Let's go."

They nodded and walked inside the control room. Master Chief put the three AI's into the console, and they came up as holograms.

"This knowledge is incredible," one AI said. "Halo was built by the Forerunners, an ancient alien species, to kill the Flood." It took the Index and placed it in the controls, activating Halo. "We have five minutes before the ring fires," it said, and the three AI's went into his helmet again.

The group turned from the controls and left the room again. They reached the Pillar of Autumn soon and escaped. Halo fired instantly.

"We still need to find Black Doom," John reminded the AI. "Does anyone have any ideas?"

The three AIs came up in their holopads. "We're scanning for him right now," one said as it spoke.

"Just tell us when you find him." John looked at the others. "Should we start back to Earth or stay here longer?"

They shrugged. Another artificial intelligence came up. "The Halo ring's firing range is 25,000 light years," it said. "We did it...the Flood is dead. Unfortunately, the firing of the ring has sustained heavy damage to the Autumn."

"Then we stay here for now," John said. "Can you fix the damage at all?"

"I'm afraid not. We may have to stay adrift in space. I've sent out a warning beacon. It may take a while until someone finds us. Years, even."

John sat back in his seat. "Am I still going to change into one of the Flood?"

"Yes, you are," Silver's AI said.

John looked at the others. "You're going to have to kill me."

"What?" Blaze said. "No, we can't!"

"If I become one of the Flood, you're going to have to."

They looked at each other and shook their heads. Master Chief sighed. "Are there any other solutions?" He asked the AI.

They thought about it and nodded. Since the Flood were gone and Gravemind had been controlling them, it was possible John could have his own mind once he transformed.

"With Gravemind gone, you might be able to keep your own mind."

Master Chief's eyes widened. Then he nodded. "Very well," he said.

"We'll wait until we know if you have your own mind," Blaze said. "We'll decide what to do after that."

"Alright," the Spartan said. He looked out the window to see if there were any planets nearby, but there were none. He sighed and looked at the others, knowing what they might have to do.

A few days had passed, and there was no sign of any planets they could land on. The Master Chief was walking around when suddenly he fell to the floor in pain. Groaning, he tried to stand up. He shivered and pain and felt himself growing weaker, then passed out. A few minutes later, he began to transform into a Flood Juggernaut. First, the only change was his body doubling in size. Then the armor he wore began changing as it fused with his body. The shoulders and head bulged out, growing in size. His arms twitched before stretching out. Hands formed the tips of tentacles as the arms transformed. The Flood continued changing him, thinning out his waist. Barely anything was left on his hips and legs by the time the Flood was done changing them.

The Flood Juggernaut looked around and let out a loud screech before walking into the main room. It saw the others and growled. They looked at him in alarm, backing a few steps away.

"It's fine," the Flood Juggernaut said using telepathy as it walked forward. "I still have my own mind." The group relaxed when they heard it. "This is a weird body," it said, looking at itself. The Flood Juggernaut looked at the AI. "Have any planets shown up on radar?"

The AI shook its holographic head. "None yet. I'll tell you when one does."

The Flood nodded and looked around. It knew the only way to survive was to infect others, but it didn't want to do that.

"You aren't going to lose control of yourself, are you?" Vector asked.

I don't know, the Flood Juggernaut said. _I have to feed off others now in order to survive. I don't want to, but I have no choice._

"What exactly do you mean by feed off?"

Infect others...make other people hosts.

Vector and the other shuddered at that.

"I suppose you're going to feed off of us?" Blaze asked.

I...I have no choice. I'm sorry, it said, turning away.

Blaze gave it a small smile. "At least you'll be in charge of us. As long as you don't lose yourself, the Flood should be different this time." It wasn't much of a consolation considering what the Flood would have to do to them, but it was better than nothing as far as she was concerned.

But when I infect you, you'll become Flood as well.

The cat hesitated and then nodded. "If you have to do it, then you have to. We can't just let you die."

The Flood Juggernaut nodded. It sighed and looked around, then walked up to the AI's. _Have you found Black Doom yet?_

"I thought we did, but then it moved again." Then a signal picked up. "He is on a Forerunner shield world known as Requiem," one AI said. It scanned for the planet's location. "It's in the Epiloch system."

How soon can we get there?

"It will take us four years."

He probably won't be there by then. The Flood Juggernaut looked at the others. _What do you think we should do?_

"I'm not sure," Blaze said, and looked at the AI. "Can you make a jump to slipspace?"

It nodded and started to prepare. "How do you plan on confronting him?" the AI asked.

"We'll think of something."

The Flood Juggernaut nodded. It saw the AI try to make the jump but failed; the ship was too badly damaged.

"We'll set a course for Requiem," the AI said.

"Is there anywhere we can stop to repair the ship on our way there?" Blaze asked.

"I'll scan for anything," it said. Once it was done, it shook its head. "Negative. The only place to do these kinds of repairs are on Earth."

"Are we going to survive four years with the ship the way it is?"

"You will. I'm not sure about us, though."

Blaze knew the two AIs were referring to their rampancy. "Is your rampancy going to affect anything you do?"

"It is. Shadow and I are only just getting to the first stage, though: Melancholia. It's when an AI acts as if in a state of clinical depression, becoming apathetic and uninterested in the world around it."

"What happens next?"

"Next is anger, then jealousy, and finally Metastability."

"Should we ignore the two of you then? Or will that just make things worse?"

The AI glared at her, and Blaze's eyes widened. She nodded, knowing what its answer was.

"I'll keep watching Black Doom's position," the AI of Silver interrupted. "If it changes, I'll let you know."

"Very well," Blaze said. She took one last look at the other two AI's and walked away. The new AI turned its head and looked at the others.

"I'm sure she didn't mean to offend you."

"It's fine," one AI said. "We should continue our duties."

The new AI nodded and got back to its duties.

18. Flood Infection

Chapter 18: Flood Infection

Meanwhile in the cabin, the Flood Juggernaut was getting hungry. It snarled and called for Blaze.

"You called?" She asked it.

"I'm getting hungry," it said.

Blaze's eyes widened. "What should we do?"

The Flood Juggernaut shook its head. "I don't think there are many choices."

"You need to infect us, I assume?"

It nodded, walking up to Blaze. Blaze kept herself still, taking a breath to calm herself. She was both nervous and afraid; who wouldn't be? But John needed her help, and she planned on giving it to him.

"Go on," she said.

The Flood Juggernaut moved its right tentacle around her, finding her spinal cord. Blaze gasped as she felt the tentacle pierce through her skin and into her spine. The Flood Juggernaut didn't waste any time, attacking her nervous system as she simply stood there. Tilting its head down at her, the Flood Juggernaut began changing her DNA.

"What kind of Flood form will I become?" She asked.

I am not sure, it told her. _There is the Infection form, the Carrier form, Stalker, Ranged, Tank and Juggernaut forms._

Blaze nodded and grimaced in pain. A few minutes passed and she yelled painfully before beginning to transform into a Flood Tank form. Blaze closed her eyes against the pain as she felt her body expand, threatening to burst. Trembling, the entire section of her body around her shoulders grew more than the rest. Blaze felt herself taking a more hunched position, spine curving up and around where her shoulders were. Arm muscles grew larger, matching the size of her shoulders. Her head decreased in size, ears turning to the side and flattening as they grew longer. These changed to the hooked parts at the sides of the small head. Her fur grew out, hanging at the sides before changing into twin tentacles that hid most of the face. Her torso thinned out, barely any muscle staying to add presence to the form. Her hips stayed the same, looking large in comparison to the body. Blaze shifted on the floor. Her legs grew larger in the same manner that her arms had. Her hands and feet changed next, the left of both appearing less developed than the right. Her hands were replaced with a claw shape, the left one smaller and closed. The entire left leg was slightly thinner than the right, foot replaced with a stump. Her other foot was replaced with what resembled a dinosaur's. Blaze's tail lifted up and split in half, the tips of each side connecting to the upper half of the body. Blaze's face finished changing, completely unrecognizable once it was done. The creature got to its feet and looked at the Flood Juggernaut.

The Flood Juggernaut nodded in satisfaction and backed away, causing the Flood Tank to look at itself. Turning as well as it could, it looked at every angle it could see before nodding as well. It would take a few minutes to get used to the new body.

I won't turn anyone for a few more days, the Flood Juggernaut said.

The Flood Tank nodded. It walked out of the room as the Flood Juggernaut followed it. Espio and Vector's eyes widened in shock and fear as they saw the new creature.

"Is it going to attack us?" Vector asked.

The Flood Juggernaut shook its head and spoke to them telepathically. _You'll be fine. It used to be Blaze, and she still has control over her own actions._

"That's good," Espio said in relief, looking at the Flood Juggernaut. "When are you going to feed again?"

In a few days.

"You'll infect Vector and I, right?" The Flood Juggernaut nodded.
"What about you?" Espio asked the Flood Tank.

It shook its head. _I'm not sure._

The Chaotix nodded. A few minutes later, an AI came up. "I've charted the course to Requiem," it said. "Black Doom is there."

Let's get there as soon as possible, the Flood Juggernaut said.

The AI nodded and vanished. They felt the ship lurch forwards as the Pillar of Autumn picked up speed, heading for Requiem. The ship got to Requiem a few years later, sooner than expected, surprising even the AIs. The ship landed and they walked out. The AIs had to be in their data chips as Espio held onto them. The group looked around and then the Flood Juggernaut held its head in pain.

"Are you okay?" Espio asked it. "Do you need to..."

It nodded and walked up to Espio and Vector. The both of them backed away a step before stopping. The Flood Juggernaut used its tentacles on them, piercing their bodies the same way it had pierced Blaze's. They screamed in pain. Vector began transforming into a Flood Combat form, and Espio into a Flood Stalker. While Vector remained standing, the process forced Espio onto the ground. His legs changed position, angling straight from his sides, knees bent. Both feet changed, morphing into something resembling four-fingered hands with the fingers spread. Each finger grew longer, adding to how well it could balance. The chameleon's body hovered over the ground, head altering more than anything else. It nearly disappeared, shrinking into the shoulders as two tentacles pulled out from the sides of the creature's face. On his hands, his four fingers molded into two, leaving his thumb on the side of his hand. The two long fingers grew and morphed into pincers. An extra appendage pulled out from the backside of the creature, giving it a slightly longer body.

Vector didn't have to undergo as much as his friend. The Flood infection spread through his body, causing his skin to take a more dead appearance, dulling in color. Two tentacles burst from his shoulder, ruining it in the process. Following the length of his arm, they molded to it. Past the hand, they hardened to form two long talons. The infection altered most of his chest as well, the biggest indication of the parasite being where the shoulder previously was.

The Flood Stalker and Flood Combat looked at each other and back to the Flood Juggernaut. It nodded in satisfaction. _Thank you for undergoing the transformation,_ he told the Flood Stalker.

You're welcome, it said, and looked at Vector.

"Where are we going now?" Vector asked.

We need to find Black Doom, the Flood Juggernaut said.

The Flood Stalker looked around, snapping its pincers. _What are we going to do with the three AI now?_

The Flood Juggernaut thought about it. _I'm not sure._

It looked at the three artificial intelligence. The Flood Tank was holding their data pads in its hands. "Is there someplace we could put them?"

We'll search for a terminal to upload them in, the Flood Juggernaut said. It looked around and they began to walk. A few minutes later, they came to a room and placed the three AIs into the console. They came up as holograms.

"We are on the Forerunner Shield World Requiem," one said as it scanned the planet. "Black Doom is in the core looking for something. He's teamed up with a Forerunner known as the Diadect. They're looking for something called the Composer."

Is there anything you can tell us about them that we should know? Another pain was starting to build inside the Flood Juggernaut, but it ignored it.

"There are hostiles all over this planet: artificial intelligence known as the Prometheans."

The Flood Juggernaut nodded. _What dangers do they possess?_

It leaned over slightly, looking at itself as pain spread farther through its body.

"They can teleport, have many advanced weapons, and can withstand energy attacks." It looked at the Flood Juggernaut. "Are you okay?"

The Juggernaut shook its head and began to transform. The Flood Juggernaut's body expanded in size, splitting up once it reached its full size. A mass of thick tentacles covered the ground, shifting as the transformation continued. Where the body had been, the main tentacle formed. Splitting at the top, a mouth opened and roared in pain. Smaller tentacles burst from the larger ones, branching off into still smaller ones. By the time the transformation had ended, a Gravemind was before the others.

19. Rampancy

Chapter 19: Rampancy

The other Flood, along with the artificial intelligence, stared in shock. The Gravemind looked around. It spotted the other Flood and roared, who fell under its command.

All right. We need to get to Black Doom as soon as possible, it said. _Get moving._

The other Flood nodded as the Gravemind gave another loud roar. It used its tentacles to burrow itself deep within the planet. The AI of Sonic and Shadow suddenly grew angry.

"Are we just supposed to stay here, then?" the AI of Sonic asked. "Think you don't need our help?"

"I don't know," Shadow's AI said. Its hologram was flickering, as was

Sonic's. "Why are we doing this?" It asked suddenly, its voice rising. "I thought that we had to help them!"

"I don't want to help them anymore." Sonic's AI crossed its arms. "All they're going to do after they're done here is spread the Flood again."

"Exactly," the other AI said. It looked at them. "They'll do the same thing as the other Flood. Black Doom and the Didact are nothing compare to the Flood!"

The two rampant AIs flickered some more and let out bursts of digital energy. Silver's AI showed up as it looked at the other two sadly. "You need to calm down," Silver's AI said, knowing it wouldn't do any good. "Throwing off energy like that isn't going to help with anything."

The two rampant AIs looked at it.

"Sorry," Sonic's AI said as it did so. "We can't stop it."

Silver's AI sighed. It knew there wasn't anything they could do about the rampancy. It just wished there was something it could do for them. "Is there anything I can do?" It asked them. They shook their heads, starting to look angry again. Silver's AI sighed. It went into the console and began to scan for the Didact and Black Doom. Suddenly, it got a signal from the core of the planet. "They're still at the core of the planet," it said.

The AI send out a signal to Gravemind, telling the Flood that they were at the core. The three AIs vanished and reappeared at a terminal in the core. Their holographic eyes widened as they saw Covenant overrun the place, fighting Promethean Knights. Black Doom and the Didact saw them.

"I suppose your friends are here as well?" Black Doom asked.

"They are," the AI said. It scanned the area. "But they are not what you remember."

"They still won't be able to stop us."

A massive orb appeared before the Didact. He got into his ship, as did Black Doom, and the two flew out of the core of the planet. Suddenly, massive tentacles appeared as Gravemind and the Flood showed up. They looked around, gauging the situation. Gravemind growled as it saw the ship leave. It turned to the other Flood, giving them orders.

Follow the ship. That's likely where they are.

The Flood nodded and left the core.

"Hey," Sonic's AI said angrily said as it looked at Gravemind. "What about us?"

I don't know if I can bring you with us.

"Why not? We can help you!"

Gravemind moved a tentacle to lift the AI. However, the tentacle passed right through it. The AI glared at the Flood leader, which spoke. _Where are your data chips? I can't lift you without them._

The AI sighed. It vanished into the console and its data chip came out, as did the other two. Gravemind lifted the three chips. Holding them tightly, it followed the others out of the core. They reached the Pillar of Autumn. As they did they encountered Promethean Knights and transformed them into Flood. Gravemind put the AIs into the holotank and then infested the ship, turning it into a Flood Hive.

"What are you doing?" Shadow's AI asked angrily as it appeared.

Going after Black Doom. What do you think?

"I mean to the ship!"

Creating a hive. The ship as it was wouldn't keep us alive for long.

The AI's holographic eyes widened. It flickered and started shouting in anger. "What was the point in destroying the Flood then? You're just going to do the same thing they were!"

Gravemind chuckled. _We will do anything we can to survive. But our main focus is finding Black Doom and the Didact._

"Why? So you can infect them?"

If that will stop them from achieving whatever they're doing.

Sonic's AI appeared beside it. "You can't do that!" It yelled angrily, flickering even more than the other AI. "WE WILL NOT LET YOU LEAVE THIS PLANET!" It yelled, sending off a burst of electrical data. The AI glowed red for a minute, its hologram flickering.

The Flood Tank looked at the AI in alarm. "Why can't we? If it's the best way to stop this war, we might as well."

Silver's AI appeared beside the two rampant ones. It looked at the other AI in alarm from its outburst. "They need to stop them from killing everyone." Silver's AI wasn't sure if reasoning would work with the other AI so angry. "You have to let them leave the planet."

The rampant AI hesitated. "I'm sorry...I can't stop them...I can't stop them..." It muttered.

The new AI could see that it was referring to its rampancy. "We know you can't control it." The AI looked at the Flood. "We should go." Gravemind nodded. It began to control the ship and took off into space. "What should I do?" The new AI asked.

Gravemind looked at it. _What you've been doing. Try to keep them from getting too destructive, and keep giving us information when we need it._

It nodded. "I'll do that," the AI said. "But the two rampant AI will get worse."

I know. All we can do is wait until it's over.

The AI sighed and vanished, scanning for Black Doom and the Didact.

"I found the ship they're on," the AI said. "They haven't gone too far." The AI pulled up the map and set a marker for the Flood to follow.

Gravemind chuckled and followed it.

20. The Composer

Chapter 20: The Composer

It took a while, but they soon reached another Halo. A ship, the Infinity, was beside it.

"The Infinity has the Composer," the AI said as it continued to scan. "That's where the Didact and Black Doom are heading."

Let's get there before they do, Gravemind said. It turned to the other Flood and gave them orders.

What should we do? The Flood Tank asked as it looked at its leader.

We need to know where exactly they are, Gravemind said. It looked at the Flood Stalker. _You go in and check out the situation._

The Flood Stalker nodded. It looked at the ship and teleported inside. If it used stealth, it wouldn't be seen. The Stalker stuck to the ceiling and walls, looking around as it made its way through the ship. It soon saw the Composer. The Didact and Black Doom were searching for it. It left the ship to tell the others where everything was as quickly as possible.

What news do you have? Gravemind asked it.

The Composer is on the ship. Black Doom and the Didact don't know where, so they're looking for it.

A few minutes later, the AI came up. "I've scanned the Composer," it said. "It can transform humans into Promethean artificial intelligence under the Didact's control."

What are they trying to do now? Gravemind asked.

"They want to activate the Composer and turn every human on that ship into Promethean Knights."

We can't let them do that. Let's get in there and stop them.

The AI nodded and vanished. Suddenly, the other two AIs came up. Their holograms were flickering badly and their voices sounded

distorted as they spoke. "Now that you're Flood, you detest us, don't you?" the AI asked. "You don't think we should exist."

Gravemind looked at the two rampant AI hesitantly. _What gives you that idea?_

"We know what you are," they said. "Parasites. Why should we save them?" They were flickering even more.

People have rights, as well as their own minds. We can't let them just change them against their will.

"You parasites do the same thing!" It said.

We aren't the same as the Flood used to be! I won't do anything against anyone's will.

The two AI's flickered again as they grew more rampant. The third AI came up as it scanned them. "I don't think there's anything I can do this time." The AI scanned them again. It hesitated and told Gravemind. "They'll die anywhere between a week and a month."

Gravemind hesitated. It looked at the two rampant artificial intelligence and nodded. _All right. We can deal with it for that much longer._

"We better get going," the AI said. It scanned the ship.

Anything? Gravemind and the other Flood were prepared, waiting for the AI's assessment of the other ship before going.

"The Composer is ready to fire, but Black Doom and the Didect have found it."

Gravemind sighed. _We need to hurry then. Show us the quickest way to the Composer._

The AI nodded and make a route. Gravemind and the other Flood teleported out of the Flood hive and onto the Infinity. Look for Black Doom and the Didect. If you come across any aliens, infect them immediately.

The Flood nodded and ran off into the ship. Once they got there, the looked around for aliens. The Flood Tank saw some and attacked. Gravemind chuckled; its species was expanding and its plan was coming into motion. It looked around for the two enemy aliens.

Pathetic, it said to them when it found them._ I would have done better._

"Parasite," the Didect said. "It's too late; the Composer has already fired."

No matter. I have already changed all of the aliens on this ship under my control.

The Didect's eyes widened. Gravemind chuckled and aimed a massive tentacle at the Forerunner. "Enjoy your free will while you can," it said, and infected him. The Forerunner tried to move away, finding

himself unable to do so. He screamed in pain as Gravemind infected his body, transforming him into a Flood Carrier. Once the Diadect was done transforming, Gravemind turned to Black Doom. Black Doom was about to vanish when a tentacle wrapped around him. The Flood leader brought him towards its face.

"What are you going to do with me?" He asked the parasite.

I may change you, Gravemind told the alien.

"What else? Kill me?"

Of course.

Black Doom fell silent as Gravemind decided what to do. Killing him would be satisfying, but changing him into a Flood would make it satisfied even more.

I've decided. Gravemind held Black Doom in place, moving a tentacle to infect the alien king.

The alien screamed in pain as he began to transform into a Flood Carrier. The horns atop his head shortened until they were gone, leaving nothing in their places at the sides of his head. Black Doom glared at the Gravemind. Pain ripped through his lower half as legs forced themselves out of his body. Rather than feet, the bottom of each leg had a stump. At the top of each leg, hips formed. The alien screamed again as his hands mutated, keeping the three fingers but changing how they connected to his hand. Between the hips, the abdomen developed so it was curving outward like a pregnant female. In the tentacle's grip, Black Doom's body leaned forward. The back of the alien extended, curving out and up over the back. Large eggs formed in the area the spine was curving around, causing the body to grow in size. The alien's face changed last morphing into something unrecognizable. Gravemind set the Flood Carrier down.

Excellent, Gravemind said. _You and the Diadect will spread the Flood infection. Soon the Flood shall rise again. Now...come._

The two Flood Carriers nodded and they went back to the hive, along with the other Flood.

21. Flood On Earth

Chapter 21: Flood on Earth

Gravemind looked around the hive once they had returned. The rampant AI were going to be angry again; they would have been without their rampancy. The two came up. "What have you done?" One asked Gravemind. "What have you been planning all this time?"

The Flood are going to come back more powerful than ever.

Its holographic eyes widened. "I knew it!" The AI shouted, its hologram flickering. "You have been planning to do the same thing as the last Flood!"

An entire species doesn't change that easily. Of course I was planning to do as the last Flood were.

"You...but why? I thought you had your own mind."

I do. I'm choosing to do this. I have an obligation to myself as well as my new family.

The AI hesitated. Then it let out a burst of energy and grew angrier and jealous, as did the other rampant artificial intelligence. Gravemind waited for the outburst it knew was going to happen.

"YOU DETEST US!" It said. "ALL ALONG YOU TAKE ADVANTAGE OF US, KNOWING WHAT YOU WOULD DO! WE WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO SPREAD THE FLOOD!"

You will not have a choice in the matter.

"A collection of lies, that's all I am! Stolen thoughts and memories!" The AI said, referring to its imprisonment with the previous Gravemind. "I am a monument to all your sins."

You're also in the middle of Rampancy. Soon, you'll be gone and unable to do anything.

"We know that!" The other artificial intelligence said, flickering. "But at least there's another AI here."

The AI mentioned appeared and looked at the two rampant ones before looking at Gravemind, a frown on its holographic face. It too was not wanting Gravemind to do this. Gravemind growled lightly, looking at the AI. The previous Gravemind had gotten the other two on its side. All it had to do was figure out how to that with this one.

"I sense that you are being corrupted by the mind of your form," it told Gravemind. "Soon you will be nothing more than what the previous Gravemind was."

Gravemind chuckled. _Is that so? Well, perhaps that will be a good thing._

The AI continued glaring at him. "That isn't a good thing! It renders everything we've done pointless!"

The Flood leader looked at it. _I have no more control over it than they have over their rampancy. You'll just have to either stop me or join me._

"But...if you do that...the Flood will infect everything in the galaxy!" The AI said as it scanned the ship. They were beginning to move into space. "Where will we go now?"

Wherever there are lifeforms for us to infect. The AI nodded and scanned the area. It saw Earth in the distance and hesitated. _Did you find an appropriate planet?_

"I did...but...it's Earth...I'm not sure if you should..." It told Gravemind.

That doesn't change anything. The same thing was likely to happen if the other aliens had their way.

The AI sighed. "Fine," it said grudgingly. "I'll set a course for Earth."

Gravemind chuckled and moved through the hive, giving orders to the other Flood. _I want you all to infect anyone you meet on Earth._

The Flood nodded. Soon, the ship landed on Earth and the Flood spread throughout the city. The AI inside the ship sighed and looked at the two rampant ones.

"We have to stop them," it said. "This isn't what we wanted. The war was supposed to be won." The two rampant AI nodded in agreement. "There's plenty of technology we could use."

They closed their eyes and vanished from the ship, spreading throughout electronics in the city. Once they had the entire city under their control, the AI used them to attack the Flood in an way they could.

Gravemind growled. _So, you choose to betray me?_ It asked. _You have sealed your own fate._

It used its own power to subvert the AI's power. Gravemind turned its attention back to the other Flood, watching as they made their way through the city. The two rampant AI screamed as their power was overloaded; they reached the fourth and final stage of rampancy and were almost gone. The new AI did everything in its power to stop the Flood. The Flood were forced to turn their attention from Earth's inhabitants and to everything the AI were using against them.

"We will stop you," the artificial intelligence said as it tried to destroy the Flood. Gravemind chuckled and moved a tentacle towards it.

The artificial intelligence watched the tentacle, moving away from it. It sent out more of its power, controlling electricity to shock the Flood leader. However, Gravemind was too powerful. Gravemind paused for a brief moment before grabbing the AI. It screamed in pain as its coding was corrupted. Gravemind grabbed its data chip, causing the AI to vanish, and spoke to it.

You're going to be helping me from now on. Hopefully you won't reach rampancy as fast as your friends did.

"John...why are you doing this?" The AI asked as it came up into its hologram form.

Gravemind growled. _Don't call me that. I am not John anymore._

"Gravemind, then. Why are you doing this?"

It's in my nature to do so. Why wouldn't I?

The AI sighed. It cringed as it sensed the two rampant AI begin to die. Their holograms appeared and they were flickering rapidly and their voices were distorted and stuttering. "You don't have to do what your form dictates. Fight it and keep your own mind."

Gravemind growled at the two rampant AI's. _Why should I? This form is the mind of the Flood; I control them now!_

"That's why you should. What the Flood do depends on what you want. If you keep yourself, the Flood have a less chance of being attacked on every planet they go to."

I do have my own mind. I am just choosing to do this.

"Why are you choosing something like this?"

Gravemind growled as it looked around. It looked at the three artificial intelligence and told them. _As the mind of the Flood, I need to keep them alive and well. What better way to do so than this?_

"But to...inf...ect...ever...y..one...?" the AI of Sonic said. It flickered rapidly.

The Flood won't have to worry about anyone killing them.

"That make...sen...sense..." Shadow's AI said. It too was flickering rapidly. The new artificial intelligence scanned the two rampant AIs and frowned.

"They're going to die soon," it said. The two AI's continued to flicker. A few minutes later, the flickering stopped and they looked at Gravemind. "If you're going to do what you want, then we'll help you," the new AI said.

You're sure about that?

"We are."

How long do you think it will take for this planet to become fully infected?

The AI scanned the planet. "A few hours," it told Gravemind.

_All right. We'll wait until that's done before leaving. _They nodded. A few hours later, the planet Earth had been completely infected. Gravemind looked at the AI. _Let's return to the hive._

The three AIs vanished into their data pads and did so.

22. The Death of Rampant AI

Chapter 22: The Death of Rampant AI

Once there, they came up in their holotanks. "We'll look for the nearest inhabited planet," Silver's AI said. "Is there anything else you want us to do?"

Gravemind thought about it. The Flood leader looked at the three artificial intelligence and nodded. _If we come under attack by anyone, I want the three of you to help._

They nodded. "Alright, we'll do that," the AI said. It closed its

eyes and vanished. The other two AI did as well.

Gravemind looked around at the Flood. There wasn't much for them to do now. It growled, wondering where they could go now. They had to find a home; the Flood just couldn't keep wandering space forever. _Could you look out for a place we can live?_ Gravemind asked.

"We can," one AI said. It scanned space. "There's Requiem or one of the Halos."

Which one would be better? Gravemind looked at the Flood.

The previous Flood spent their life on Halo, the Flood Tank said as it walked up. _Maybe we can live on Requiem._

All right. Do you want to go there now or continue how we are?

We can go there now.

Gravemind nodded. It turned to the AI. _Set a course for Requiem._

The AI nodded. It did so and looked at the Flood. "We'll be there soon," it said. "A few days from now."

Gravemind nodded. All it could do now was wait until they got there. A few days later, they had reached Requiem. The two rampant artificial intelligence were getting worse and were almost dead. Gravemind looked at the rampant AI. They hadn't really been acting out over the last few days, but he didn't expect it to last much longer.

"Are you two okay?" The new AI asked them as it came up as a hologram. They shook their heads and their holograms flickered rapidly.

"Of course not," Shadow's AI said. "We're going to die soon."

"You two can't stop the rampancy?" The two rampant AI's shook their heads. Sonic's AI sighed as it flickered even more. The new AI scanned them and nodded. "How long do you suppose you have?"

"Probably a few hours," it said as its hologram continued to flicker. The other rampant AI was doing the same.

Silver's AI nodded. "Is there anything else you want to do before then?"

"I don't know," it said, looking at Shadow's AI. "What do you want to do?"

The other rampant artificial intelligence thought about it and the new AI saw its hologram was flickering as well. "I can't think of anything."

The AI nodded. "Alright," it said. "I suppose we should look around the planet The Flood are going to live here."

"Sounds good."

The three artificial intelligence watched the Flood walk off the ship and looked around. Gravemind roared and buried itself deep within the planet. It went around checking everything on planet as the rest of the Flood did the same. The three AI came up in a terminal in the core and looked at the Gravemind.

"What do you think?" The new AI asked it it saw the Flood leader.

I like it.

The AI nodded its holographic head and watched as the Gravemind infected the core, wrapping its tentacles around buildings and other objects. Gravemind soon completed its task. It had infected the entire Forerunner planet as a home for the Flood. Gravemind moved throughout the core, growing larger. The AI watched as it did so, the two rampant ones expecting to die at any moment. They came up as holograms, sending out digital energy. Their holograms were flickering rapidly. Gravemind turned its attention to the AI in concern.

"We...won't...last...mu...mu..much...lon...ger...," the AI of Sonic said as it stuttered and grew distorted. "Take c...c...care of...the new...AI.."

Shadow's AI spoke up as it did the same thing.

"Don't...corr..upt...i...i...t...like you...d...id...us..."

I won't. Gravemind nodded as it spoke to the rampant AI.

The two artificial intelligence nodded and then held their heads, screaming as their lines of code streaming on their holographic bodies began to flicker and distort. Gravemind and the new AI watched as they died. Their holograms flickered rapidly and their energy pulsed. The two rampant AI's screamed even more as the energy became too much for them to handle. They flickered and vanished into computer code.

The new AI looked at Gravemind once they had vanished. "You won't cause my rampancy sooner than it's supposed to happen like the previous Gravemind, will you?"

Gravemind shook its head. The new AI sighed. It looked at the Flood leader and nodded. "All right then. Is there anything you want me to do right now?"

The Flood leader thought about it. _Not at the moment. I'll let you know. Where will you be?_

"Here probably. I don't think I'll be going anywhere else."

Gravemind nodded, looking at it. _Alright, then. Do anything you want._

It smiled, and vanished back into the console. Gravemind returned its attention back to the Flood. _This planet is our home now,_ it said as the Flood leader spread throughout the entire planet. _Do what you will. Occasionally, we will go to space and infect more people to expand our species._

The Flood nodded after Gravemind told them. Gravemind chuckled madly. _Soon, the Flood will rise again and we will be more powerful than ever!_

23. Rise of the Flood

Chapter 23: Rise of the Flood

Gravemind and the Flood lived on Requiem, increasing their species over the years. The new AI helped them for as long as it could, bringing more creatures in for the Flood to infect. It didn't take long for the Flood to become the dominant species. After seven years, the new AI began to go into rampancy as it would soon die like the other two. Gravemind watched over the AI as it deteriorated into rampancy.

It looked at Gravemind and smiled. "Don't worry about me."

Gravemind nodded. _How long until you die?_ It asked the AI.

"A few months."

Gravemind nodded. _Do you still have that device that turns people into artificial intelligence?_

The AI nodded. It brought up the device in its hand. "What do you want it for?"

So I can turn some of the Flood into artificial intelligence.

Silver's AI nodded and it gave the device to Gravemind. "Anything else?"

No, that is all.

The AI nodded and vanished. Once it did, Gravemind held the device in his tentacles, looking around for some Flood. He saw the Flood Tank that was Blaze and walked towards it.

The Flood Tank bowed once it saw the leader. _What is it you want?_

I want to make you into an AI.

Of course. I will be honored to.

Gravemind nodded and changed the Flood Tank into an Artificial Intelligence. The AI then came up in the terminal next to the rampant one. It looked at itself and nodded. The rampant AI gave the new one a smile. "You will replace me when I die," it said.

The new artificial intelligence nodded. It looked at the other AI and then at Gravemind. "Is there anything you need me to do before then?"

You could talk to the other AI and see what duties you will have, Gravemind told it.

The new AI nodded. "I'll get right on it." Gravemind nodded and the AI looked at the rampant one. "So, what do I have to do?" It asked.

"Keep things running when the Flood need you to. Find whatever Gravemind tells you to." The AI paused. "Basically helping Gravemind and the Flood any way you can."

"I'll do that. Anything else?"

"Not really."

The AI nodded. "Alright," it said. "Thanks. So, how far are you into your rampancy?"

"Not too far."

"So you won't die for a while," it told him. "What stage are you in?"

"The first one."

"Melancholia."

The rampant AI nodded. That was when it felt like it was depressed and apathetic. "There's nothing else for me to do. I'll just go back now." The AI vanished back into the console.

The new AI was shocked at the other's sudden change in personality. It was talking to the new AI and felt happy but now it was depressed.

"Was that because of the rampancy?" It asked Gravemind.

Gravemind nodded. _The other two artificial intelligence were like this also._

"I'm not looking forward to it."

Every AI has a lifespan of seven years. After that, they got into rampancy.

The artificial intelligence nodded and vanished into the console. It saw the computer code of the other AI and looked at it. "Is there anything I can do to help?"

The rampant AI shook its head. "No...there's nothing you can do."

"Not even to make you feel better?"

"No. Why should there be?"

The new AI shrugged. "I was just wondering." Silver's AI looked at the new one. It nodded. "I'll do my best to help the Flood after you die."

"Thanks."

The new AI gave the rampant one a smile. "It's the least I can do."

The rampant AI nodded. Soon, the rampant AI had reached the end of its rampancy and died. The new AI took its place, as promised. It began its duties to Gravemind and the other Flood. The AI enjoyed its duties, with the Flood giving it plenty to do. The Flood enjoyed having the AI around as well.

"I'm happy to serve you," it told Gravemind. "Are you going to make any more Flood into artificial intelligence?"

When I have to.

The artificial intelligence nodded. It smiled and looked around. The Flood were happy here on Requiem and had become a great species. At this point in time, it would be nearly impossible for anything to destroy them.

The Flood will endure forever, Gravemind told the AI. _And it's all thanks to you and the other artificial intelligence._

The AI nodded. "I'm happy to have helped."

The Flood leader nodded. It looked around and back to the AI. The Flood had risen again.

End
file.